Writing and the Other:

Franz Kafka and Maurice Blanchot

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In the Faculty of Humanities

2011

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School of Arts, Histories and Cultures

Content

Abstract 3

Declaration and Copyright Statement 4

Acknowledgment 5

Introduction: Franz Kafka and Maurice Blanchot: The Space for the Other in Writing 6

Chapter 1: Literature in Blanchot: Worklessness as Spacing between Word and Its Referent 30

Chapter 2: What is Worklessness in Kafka? 50

Chapter 3: The Act of Writing

Part I: The Disappearance of Self 67

Chapter 4: The Act of Writing

Part II: Self and the Impossibility of Death 86

Chapter 5: Memory and Récit in Blanchot 111

Chapter 6: The Primal Scene and Récit in Blanchot 132

Chapter 7: Kafka's Fictions and the Impossibility of Narration as Récit 155

Conclusion 176

General Bibliography 191

Final word count, including footnotes: 77095 words

Abstract

The University of Manchester

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May 2011

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This thesis attempts to explore what occurs in the act of writing; arguing that the act of writing opens a space for 'the other.' For this argument, I bring Franz Kafka who has remained unthought in terms of the act of writing in the deconstructive thinking close to Maurice Blanchot who writes both theoretical discussion and fiction specifically on the act of writing. Blanchot has written extensively on Kafka; his récits also are influenced by Kafka. In the introduction, I argue through Borges and Benjamin that Kafka and Blanchot create their past and future, so that we understand any text in the past or the future differently if we know them. In other words, works are in dialogue with one another. This creativity is actually being open to 'the other.'

Chapter one argues that Blanchot criticizes language for making things absent by representing them. For him, writing should be the act of making space between word and its referent in order that the referent shows itself infinitely. This spacing, for Blanchot, is desoeuvrement or worklessness as an undoing of being, the neutral spacing that let the thing's otherness come infinitely. The second chapter argues that Joseph K. in *The Castle* is exposed to this spacing or desoeuvrement which makes him and the castle distance from their meaning and find the singular possibilities of their unknown nature as 'the other' infinitely. Blanchot's meaning of literature necessitates dealing with the notion of the author. In this sense, the third chapter argues that when Kafka is metamorphosed into writing he loses his identity. Writing, for Kafka, becomes the space in which he loses his sense of selfhood and sees 'the other' in the self. Chapter four, by reading Blanchot's *The Instant of My Death* and Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, argues that being exposed to 'the other' in writing necessitates the process of dying, not death as one instant that begins and ends. Writing becomes the process that interrupts the border between life and death. The self gets no determination, completion, and totality and at the same time it will not be reducible to disappearance. My fifth and sixth chapters illustrate what Blanchot's means in writing a récit. Chapter five argues that the récit as a concept questions memory as the place of passed past experiences. In memory, the past, the present and the future become the 'extended present' which means memory is the place in which neither remembering nor forgetting happens. The récit rejects memory as the fixed narrative of the past. Therefore, the récit is the open space with the possibility of inventing 'the other.' Chapter six argues that the recit is the place where opens the Freud's primal scene to the prior scenes endlessly which are not located in the past; they also occur in the future. By this futurity, he leaves the space for 'the other' in the past and the future. The seventh chapter illustrates Kafka's *The Trial* while thinking of the concept of the récit. The text has no pre-existent story as its origin and problematizes the concept of repetition. By removing the originary state and teleological existence, the text is open to 'the other,' the new possibilities of being written and read endlessly. The conclusion as well as further discussing what 'the other' is and how writing lets it come propose that the ethics of writing in Kafka and Blanchot is not limited only to the openness of the self to 'the other;' it also brings out the community which prepares itself for the coming of 'the other.'

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any university or other institute of learning.

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Acknowledgment

Foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Jeremy Tambling for the continuous support of my Ph.D study and research, for his patience, motivation, enthusiasm, and immense knowledge. His guidance helped me in all the time of research and writing of this thesis. I could not have imagined having a better advisor and mentor for my Ph.D study.

Besides my supervisor, I would like to thank the rest of my thesis committee: Dr. David Alderson and Anke Bernau for their encouragement, insightful comments, and hard questions.

Last but not the least, I would like to thank my wife, Sanaz for supporting me in every respect, my family: my parents Ali and Showkat for giving birth to me at the first place and supporting me spiritually throughout my life, and my teacher and friend, Ahmad Dadkhah for his spiritual inspiration and intellectual motivation to me.

Introduction

Franz Kafka and Maurice Blanchot: The Space for the Other in Writing

For deconstructive thinkers such as Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Emmanuel Levinas, and Maurice Blanchot, what is called deconstruction can be the act of questioning and looking at limits and borders. According to Spivak, who has given a general explanation of deconstruction, the violation of borders which characterizes the main feature of deconstruction brings the self into a relationship with what can be named radical alterity or otherness. The advent of the 'other' occurs outside the human subject in an ontological horizon which deals with origin and identity.[1] In this sense, deconstruction brings into question any structure which is presupposed to be closed and subject to limitations and conditions. This question obviously includes origin and identity in the ontological horizon. In deconstructive thinking, literature is where boundaries in ontology are violated. Literature, as Jacques Derrida writes, stands on the edge of everything, almost beyond everything, including itself.[2] Literature offers a place for the 'other' and prepares self for the 'other' to come. Preparing for the 'other,' in deconstruction, is constructive and affirmative as it may seem to dismantle and decompose the integration of self. This thesis specifically deals with the question 'how does writing as the generic term which includes literature make a space to let the 'other' come?' in Franz Kafka (1883-1924) and the French writer and deconstructive theorist, Maurice Blanchot (1907-2003).

Franz Kafka is one of the most influential novelists and short story writers of the early 20th century. Kafka seems to be accessible to almost any methodology one might care to apply. In fact, he appears to be the ideal subject for literary criticism. The debate on the validity of any interpretation of his works is endless. This is why we witness how critics have interpreted Kafka's works in the context of a variety of literary and non-literary schools, such as modernism, surrealism, magic realism, and symbolic reading and in non-literary schools, in areas such as philosophy, theology, psychology, sociology, and linguistics.[3] Kafka has

[1] For the definition of deconstruction, see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'The Setting to Work of Deconstruction' in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999); Christopher Norris, *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2003); Nicholas Royle, *Jacques Derrida* (London: Routledge, 2003); and Radolph Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986).

[2] Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Atrridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 47.

[3] For comprehensive reference book of both primary and secondary texts pertaining to Kafka, see Maria Luise Caputo-Mayr and Juliusn M. Herz, *Franz Kafka: An International Bibliography of Primary and Secondary*

though remained untouched by deconstructive reading in terms of the act of writing which leaves the space for the 'other.' Besides other major French deconstructive figures such as Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Emmanuel Levinas, Blanchot as the important figure in deconstructive thinking perhaps more than anyone else has looked at literature and the nature of writing and specifically occupies himself with the question I pose in this thesis. He has theorized the relationship between literature and ontology and changed the manner in which they are related. Leslie Hill in his review of Blanchot's intellectual itinerary writes: 'Blanchot in his writing has renewed the critical debate concerning the ontological- or non-ontological - status of literature and art in general.'[4] He has related literature to the question of being. The question is 'how does language which becomes literature give being?' In this regard, as Blanchot writes, literature begins with question by which it calls into question itself and being:

> Let us suppose that literature begins at the moment when literature becomes a question.[5]

Many critics write that Blanchot's fictions are influenced by Kafka.[6] He wrote some essays on Kafka: 'Reading Kafka,' 'Kafka and Literature,' and 'Kafka or the Demand of Literature.'[7] These essays read Kafka as the writer who has devoted himself to the question that literature poses on thought and makes and unmakes the writer, undoes the identity and its possibility of formation. In other words, writing leaves open the space for the 'other.' This reading of Kafka can be seen in Blanchot's theorization and his fictions. My thesis will study how writing opens the space for the 'other' in Kafka and Blanchot.

The Dialogue between Kafka and Blanchot

In this section, I will explain why Kafka and Blanchot should be read together. It shows that when a text is read, it is necessary to be read in relation to other texts. In this sense, I will clarify the necessity of reading Kafka together with Blanchot. For this purpose, Borges' essay on Kafka helps to argue my point. Borges in the essay 'Kafka and His

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Literature (Munich: K.G Saur, 2000). See also Richard T. Gray, Ruth V. Gross, Rolf J. Goebel, and Clayton Koelb, *A Franz Kafka Kafka Encyclopedia* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2005).

[4] Leslie Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 2.

[5] Maurice Blanchot, 'Literature and the Right to Death' in *The Gaze of Orpheus*, trans. by Lydia Davis (New York: Station Hill Press, 1981), p. 21.

[6] Jeff Fort, 'Translator's Introduction' in *Aminadabe* (Nebraska: The University of Nebraska Press, 2002).

[7] Maurice Blanchot, *The Sirens' Song*, trans. by Sacha Rabinovitch (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982).

Precursors' thinks Kafka himself is a precursor, the one who modifies and refines the past and the future. [8] Borges gives a chronological survey of some of Kafka's precursors through which he considers Kafka as the literary figure who is present always between the past and the future. He belongs to the past and future without belonging. He is dispersed throughout time; he does not belong to a specific period. In other words, Kafka always lives 'in the middle.' According to *OED*, the word 'precursor' ratifies this 'betweenness' of Kafka who changes before and after himself. The word means both 'predecessor' and 'harbinger'; the one who both comes before and predicts the future.

Borges gives, as the first precursor, Zeno's paradox to illustrate the everlasting distance of K., the protagonist, from the castle in Kafka's *The Castle*. K. enters a village in which the castle is situated. He tries to enter the castle but never arrives. He always remains distant from the castle. Borges writes:

> A moving body on *A* will not be able to reach point *B*, because before it does, it must cover half of distance between the two, and before that, half of half, and before that, half of the half of the half, and so on to infinity; the formula of this famous problem is, exactly, that of *The Castle*.[9]

This sequence presents a problematic situation, since it contains no first distance to start, for any possible (finite) first distance could be divided in half, and hence would not be first after all. Therefore, the trip cannot even begin. The absence of the first point removes the reciprocal relation between two points; hence, it leads to the perpetual distance that prevents the two points join together.[10] The absence of the first point produces the heterogeneity which removes the possibility of a dialectical relation between the two points. These two points in approaching each other are not appropriated to form an unified entity. It could be called 'distanciation' which implies the everlasting distance that opens the space for disclosing differences not similarities. Borges finds the operation of Zeno's paradox in the relation between K. and the castle. The more K. moves forward to reach the castle, the more he

[8] Jorge Luis Borges, 'Kafka and His Precursors' in *Other Inquisitions*, trans. by Ruth L. C. Simms (London: Souvenir Press, 1973), pp. 106-109.
[9] Jorge Luis Borges, p. 106.
[10] In terms of the idea of 'distanciation' that reveals the discontinuity within an entity, Foucault in his preface of *The Order of Things* quotes Borges when he argues that between the order which the human culture superimposes on things and the scientific theories or the philosophical interpretations which explain why the order exists in general lies a domain in which things belong to an unspoken order. This middle region, according to the culture and the age in question, continuous and graduated or discontinous and piecemeal. See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. xxii.

distances himself from it. This perpetual approach to the castle implies the constant 'distanciation' that never lets the two points unite together. They always remain in proximity. K. on his first day in the village walks toward the castle in a street that never reaches the castle not because it is never way but because it turns back toward the first point:

> So he resumed his walk, but the way proved long. For the street he was in, the main street of the village, did not lead up to the Castle hill, it only made toward it and then, as if deliberately, turned aside, and though it did not lead away from the Castle it got no nearer to it either.[11]

K. never is able to reduce the unknown castle to the known and the castle cannot rule over K. That is why they always remain in their polarized relationship. In other words, they are sustained in the proximity and absolute distance.[12] For Borges, Kafka's *The Castle* unfolds Zeno's paradox or it is the latter that explains the former. In other words, they carry on a dialogue together.

Regarding the notion of 'distanciation,' we can find it in Maurice Blanchot, who lives *after* Kafka. Although Borges has not mentioned Blanchot, I use him to clarify the 'precursor' since his living *after* Kafka shows that the 'precursor's influence includes not only the past but also the future. Blanchot explores a relation between two points that could be similar to the Kafkan 'distanciation.' In this relation, Blanchot writes:

> Point A would be distant from point B by a distance other than point B's distance from point A; a distance excluding reciprocity and presenting a curvature whose irregularity extends to the point of discontinuity.[13]

In Blanchot's view, if we consider the two points as constituents within an entity, the more the point *A* gets close to the entity *B*, the more it distances itself from *B*. It happens to *B* in approaching *A* either. The two points get close to each other but the heterogeneous nature of the relation causes distance between them. If, according to Blanchot, we consider that the

[11] Franz Kafka, *The Castle*, trans. by Willa and Edwin Muir (Middlesex: Penguin Books in association with Martin Secker & Warburg, 1975), p. 17.
[12] Jacques Derrida, 'Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas' in *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978), pp. 112-114.
[13] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. by Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 73.

distance between the two entities is not reciprocal or isomorphic, it will be similar to Zeno's idea of the absence of the first point and the impossibility of approaching. For Blanchot, this relation does not homogenize for the sake of appropriation and unification in which two things are always supposed in equal, symmetric, and reciprocal relation. The opposite of this homogenization would be heterogeneity: two things are not subject to equality and correlation in relation to each other in order to be totalized and understandable. As Blanchot writes, the heterogeneity is due to 'discontinuity' which challenges the dialectics on which ontology is formed. It becomes:

> a relation that challenges the notion of being as continuity or as a unity or gathering of beings; a relation that would except itself from the problematic of being and would pose a question that is not of being. Thus, in this questioning, we would not only leave dialectics, but also ontology.[14]

Dialectics is the system of synthesis that resolves internal differences within an entity in order to unify it. But, in this new possibility of relationship, the nonreciprocal relation between *A* and *B*, Blanchot reveals the instability of identity because of internal differences; that is to say, the heterogeneity caused by the absence of the first point which removes the possibility of having a center and a unified identity. The discontinuity made by this condition qualifies the entity as unknown. Levinas who is Blanchot's friend developed the thought that the relation between one and the 'other' should not be totalized and reduced to understanding, since the 'other' is more than one thinks and always exceeds one's cognition. He gives the model of the relation between one and the 'other' based on height, inequality, and asymmetry. These three qualities of the relation signify that the 'other' is not subject to comprehension and is irreducible to finitude. The 'other' could be anything other than I, since 'I' always reduces everything to his own cognition. In other words, the 'other' escapes the cognitive power of 'I'. In this sense, the 'other' is higher than 'I'. In this model, Levinas speaks of the term 'curvature' which signifies the same as what Blanchot expressed as 'discontinuity.' For Levinas, the 'other' who is a separated face and higher than us comes to us from the outside:

> This curvature of the intersubjective space inflects distance into elevation.[15]

[14] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 10.
[15] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. by Alphons Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne, 1969), p. 291.

This superiority, unlike the transcendental and hierarchical system, makes the relation between I and the 'other' nonreciprocal and discontinuous. The polarized system of 'elevation' and 'distance' does not close the two sides so that they could know each other in the dialectical system by which they reduce differences to similarities; they remain unknown. Although Blanchot and Lavinas are similar in terms of asymmetric relation between the two points and the exteriority of the 'other' as unknown, Levinas conceives this 'curvature' as the very presence of God.[16]

Blanchot explains that this non-reciprocal relation by which the 'other' enters characterizes being as 'not of being' but of 'relation:'

> We could say that the Other, this 'Other' in play in the third kind of relation, is no longer one of its terms; it is neither one nor the other, being nothing other than relation itself.[17]

The 'other' enters as the result of the nonreciprocal relation, 'the third kind,' of the two sides. When they enter into relation with each other, they encounter the possibly unknown and infinite nature of the relation. Since the two sides are unknown, they are not present in terms of having identities. Hence, the only thing that matters is the very relation between them that opens them to their unknown nature. The 'relation itself' produces new possibilities. In this sense, the 'relation in itself' could be seen in the relation between K. and the castle in *The Castle* which shows their unknown nature. The castle as the higher entity which K. tries to know is not reducible to understanding. K. attempts to interpret anything outside himself as otherness in order to possess them but finds this hermeneutic mastery delusory as Stanley Corngold, the major critics of Kafka, argues:

> Cognitive mastery might be one approach to the otherness. Yet the tonality of this act of hermeneutic mastery over the castle is much menaced, merely dusky and delusory.[18]

[16] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 291.
[17] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 73.
[18] Stanley Corngold, 'Kafka and the Ministry of Writing' in *Franz Kafka: The Office Writings*, ed. by Stanley Corngold, Jack Greenberg, and Benno Wagner, trans. by Eric Patton with Ruth Hein (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 12.

When 'cognitive mastery' does not occur and K. keeps his distance from the castle, the only thing to be thought in this relation would be the 'relation itself,' since they are unknown to each other.

In Borges' view, it is implied that the argument in Zeno's paradox and Blanchot's notion of the 'relation itself' could be found out if we know Kafka, since before reading *The Castle*, we may not find out these arguments. In other words, he helps us to understand these precursors. The main point is that they are created anew while we read them together with Kafka. Borges writes:

> The fact is that each writer *creates* his precursors. His work modifies our perception of the past, as it will modify the future.[19]

The word '*creates*' does not imply that Kafka's notion of the 'distanciation' that is expressed as the 'other' in Blanchot, has been thought by them and shows their affinities. It implies that this notion in Kafka has neither existed in the past nor that Kafka has influenced the future. Here, the point is that when writers in different times are read together, we understand that it could not be claimed that a piece of thought and its development is limited to a specific period of time. The non-specificity makes it difficult to say when and by whom a thought has been initiated. Moreover, the progress could not be thought as the movement from the past to the future. The time-sequentiality is replaced with anachronism: Kafka shows the development of the thought in his past (in Zeno) and in Blanchot who lives 'after' him. This makes it necessary to read them together in order to study and develop their thought further.

The notion of 'creation' in Borges also shows that Kafka's works reveal that a text is not closed upon itself but it is open and in 'communication' with other texts in the past and future; texts in 'communication' signifies the 'relation' which brings creativity. I will explain this notion of communication from Derrida's textual and Benjamin's historical perspectives to argue that texts will be what they really are when they are in communication with one another rather than being read separately. Rodolphe Gasché in his explanation of Derrida's meaning of the word 'text' writes that:

> The generalized text is not something that is closed upon itself in such a manner that its limits would demarcate an inside from outside [….] The

[19] Jorge Luis Borges, p. 108.

> general text is rather that border itself, from which the assignment of insides and outsides takes place, as well as where this distinction ultimately collapses.[20]

Derrida criticizes structuralism in which the text as a structure produces meaning based on arbitrarily making one of its elements the center. The possibility of meaning by making a center conceals and defers the other endless hidden possibilities and also the point that meaning is the product of the difference of elements or, in linguistic terms, signifiers. In this sense, all texts are one and work by the difference of signifiers.[21] Gasché discusses that it is:

> the rejection of the text as a totality dependent upon a unifying last reason or transcendental signified.[22]

The 'transcendental signified' is the possibility of thinking of a concept that has signification in and of itself, the concept that is present for thought and independent of a relation to language, the relation to the system of signifiers.[23] The text does not come to stop on an ultimate reference or a single truth because there is no single transcendental signified outside the text which is referred to. The ultimate reference is the result of the difference of signifiers. In this sense, all texts are actually one text, i.e. the 'generalized text,' because the ultimate reference is disseminated through all of them. They are, therefore, open and in communication with each other. Kafka shows that what has been considered as the center does not have meaning in itself but it is the result of our arbitrary relation to it. K.'s search for the origin of the law in *The Trial* and the castle in *The Castle* reveals this relation. Kafka's texts are examples of the 'generalized text' in this sense that they are not totalized formally or thematically; they are not producing meaning based on a center. The openness of his texts characterizes them as the border to distinguish the past from the future but at the same time because this openness modifies other texts and removes the sense of temporality it collapses as the border. The openness signifies that there would not be a single truth behind a text that closes upon itself as a complete entity. They never become complete in themselves or even in communication with others because the truth of the text is moving. This notion is also proposed by Roland Barthes. He uses the term 'text' and writes that the 'text' cannot stop; its

[20] Rodolphe Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 280. Gasché is a student of Paul de Man. He is a critic of the American Yale deconstruction school.
[21] For this argument in Derrida, see his criticism of Saussure's linguistics. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University, 1976).
[22] Rodolphe Gasché, *The Tain of the Mirror: Derrida and the Philosophy of Reflection*, p. 280.
[23] Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. by Alan Bass (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 19.

constitutive moment is when it traverses after it was written. The text practices the infinite postponement of the signified. The 'ongoing work' within Barthes becomes the key concept of 'intertextuality: 'the text is not originally written by an author, but it is a fabric of quotations, resulting from thousands of sources within culture. When the author expresses himself, his words can be explained only through other words.[24] The 'ongoing work' also implies that the border between a theoretical text and a literary text is removed. The dialogue goes on between them without any distinction. Blanchot's theoretical discussions and his fictions are not distinguishable. In this sense, I do not reread Blanchot's theoretical text in Kafka's literary texts or vice versa. The relationship between the two bodies of writing could no longer be seen as that of text and metatext but rather as genuinely intertextual.[25]

Here, besides the analysis of the openness of a text according to Derrida's meaning of textuality, I use Walter Benjamin, the German critic and philosopher whose Marxist thinking provides a revolutionary criticism of culture and tradition, specifically concerning his thought on literary criticism, to explain how a text does not have a single unified meaning. In this regard, he argues that:

> Every contemporary critique comprehends in the work more the moving truth than the resting truth, more the temporal effect than the eternal being.[26]

It is suggested that 'the moving truth' is not a single one that is referred to as the 'resting.' The 'moving truth' also does not imply that every work or text is part of a single 'eternal being.' The truth of the work of art without an origin or an end is an otherness that is moving in the sense that it is always in creation through the heterogeneous relation between one work with another. Every work that enters into this relation with other works is constructed anew. Therefore, it does not belong to a specific time or eternity; rather it is transient and has a 'temporal effect' and not 'eternal.'

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[24] Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text' and 'The Death of the Author' in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. by Richard Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986). 'Intertexuality' should be traced in Mikhail Bakhtin and Kristeva's reading of Bakhtin on the dialogic nature of language. For Bakhtin, language is dialogic, it is always involved in the relations between specific speakers in specific social situations. The conflict between one's word and the other's in every situation implies the resisting otherness of the situation in which both find themselves. This also implies further that every speaker in every situation creates him/herself anew. See Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, 'Marxism and the Philosophy of Language' in *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 212-237.

[25] John Schad has brought Francophone poststructuralist, Derrida, together with Robert Browing to show that the relation between thses two bodies of writing is no longer that of text and metatext but rather is genuinely intertextual. See John Schad, *Victorians in Theory: from Derrida to Browning* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

[26] Walter Benjamin, 'Goethe's Elective Affinities' in *Selected Writing: Volume 1, 1913-1926* ed. by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 298.

Sandor Radnoti, who explains Benjamin's ideas, considers the 'temporal effect' as the 'context' of a work in which it has been written. According to Radnoti, the 'context' cannot be reconstructed to be the same as what once existed; [27] it is constructed. Since the truth of the work, or 'the transcendental signified'[28] in Derrida's scheme, is dispersed, the context of the present reading of the work could be the hidden context of that work which has remained concealed when it has been written; the work is actually open with 'fluid borders.'[29] Hence, the present reading constructs the past work. In this sense, the boundary of time as the past and future is blurred and the process of construction continues. The work as 'the other' always calls and demands us to be in dialogue with it. Radnoti writes that:

> For Benjamin, truth content is conceivable only in the dialogue of understanding in which the creator, the work, every person the work reaches, and the whole historical world participate.[30]

At this point, we can state that not only Kafka's work but also every work creates others because every act of writing or reading becomes the space in which the 'moving truth' reveals its creation. As it is perceived that truth is always in creation, every work can create other work repeatedly. Kafka modifies his past because truth is not a single 'resting' being that could not be repeated differently or created anew. [31]

According to Benjamin, the work is characterized by the 'truth content' and the 'material content.' The former is the work's subsequent perception in different historical periods. The latter are the dominant traditional interpretations. Benjamin, by using a simile, describes the material content as wood and ash in a burning funeral pyre and the 'truth content' as the flame.[32] The 'material content' is what the text is about and its historical context whereas the truth content is the work's 'afterlife' that is continued by the dialogue of the writer, the work, reader, and other works:

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[27] Sandor Radnoti, 'Benjamin's Dialectic of Art and Society' in *Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History*, ed. by Gary Smith (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 129.
[28] Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, p. 19.
[29] Sandor Radnoti, 'Benjamin's Dialectic of Art and Society' in *Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History*, p. 129.
[30] Sandor Radnoti, p. 128. For the call from the 'other,' see Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. by Alphons Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne, 1969). Derrida also in his essay on Joyce reads a response to oneself that involves an other. The word, 'yes' in Joyce invites the invention of the other which defers total identity. See Jacques Derrida, 'Ulysses Gramaphone: Here Say Yes in Joyce' in *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Atrridge (New York: Routledge, 1992).
[31] Walter Benjamin, 'Goethe's Elective Affinities' in *Selected Writing: Volume 1, 1913-1926* ed. by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 298.
[32] Walter Benjamin, 'Goethe's Elective Affinities', p. 298.

> The concrete realities rise up before the eyes of the beholder all the more distinctly the more they die out in the world. With this, however, to judge by appearances, the material content and the truth content, united at the beginning of a work's history, set themselves apart from each other in the course of its duration, because the truth content always remains to the same extent hidden as the material content comes to the fore. More and more, therefore, the interpretation of what is striking and curious - that is, the material content - becomes a prerequisite for any later critics.[33]

Commentators open the work to the subjective interpretations which make the work exhausted and familiarized. This is what Benjamin considers as the 'material content.' Jennifer Todd argues that,

> we may unconsciously accept the interpretation of the artworld authorities- church dignitaries, princes, collectors, artists, publishers, gallery owners, critics, and university lecturers depending on the social and political context.[34]

Here, it is suggested that if one particular mode of perception in one tradition closes any understanding of Kafka's works, that is, the 'material content,' this does not mean they have become meaningless. The language of art is open to the subsequent response of audiences. The meaning of the work undergoes a change in its 'afterlife.' For Benjamin, this is considered as 'truth content,' the changing modes of reception by posterity. Todd continues to explain that:

> it is rather historically conditioned changes in the modes of perception, common throughout a society or an historical period and provoked by a wide-ranging social and technological developments, that are crucial in constituting and changing a work's meaning.[35]

The historical changes in modes of perception help the work in the past to be opened to the present. Some works might seem to be of no relevance to the contemporary time, but they

[33] Walter Benjamin, 'Goethe's Elective Affinities', p. 297.
[34] Jennifer Todd, 'Production, Reception, Criticism: Walter Benjamin and the Problem of Meaning in Art' in *Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 109.
[35] Jennifer Todd, 'Production, Reception, Criticism: Walter Benjamin and the Problem of Meaning in Art' in *Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History*, p. 111.

really share with the present the conflicts, struggles, and problems of the artist in the past. Kafka is the one that shares with us his conflicts in the present time.

This characterization of the 'moving truth' as the 'other' and the distinction between 'the material content' and 'the truth content' can clarify Borges' notion of 'precursor.' The 'truth content' of a text as its 'afterlife' can be unfolded by writers such as Kafka or Blanchot who as the precursor creates the 'afterlife' of other texts. Borges' argument also implies an important point: writing has the potentiality in itself to invent new possibilities that could be the introducing of unthought materials or unknown because it never tries to transform unknown into the already known as human subjectivity does; it always replies to the otherness. In other words, it can be the primacy of the act of writing that makes heterogeneity possible within the past and the future. Writing opens the space for otherness; as Leslie Hill argues, writing, for Blanchot, was a kind of waiting that,

> did not mean the deferral of thinking. It meant 'to be on the look-out within the already thought for the unthought.'[36]

Regarding Borges, Derrida, and Benjamin, writing reveals truth as the transient and temporal that is always in creation; writing replies to truth as otherness that is always in-coming. Therefore, if we are to develop the notion of the 'other' or any other notions in Kafka and Blanchot or any other writers, we should read their texts with other writers' texts.

How Does Writing Enter 'the Other?'

Reading Kafka and Blanchot in terms of the 'other' disclose them as the most 'extreme contemporaries' in our era.[37] The notion of the 'other' in the act of writing in Kafka and Blanchot criticizes the closing of a system against its boundary, i.e. delimiting or demarcating a border. They straddle the border between closed and immanent totality and that which exceeds totality. They exceed any finitude and closure. My thesis traces the notion of the 'other' in Kafka's and Blanchot's texts in the sense that they attack the imposition of any closure or finalizing act and reject any temptation toward homogeneity. This non-finalizing act is done by writing in order to make a space for the 'other.' In other words, literature is an act of writing based on 'spacing' being found for the 'other.' The term 'spacing' reminds us of

[36] Leslie Hill, 'A Fragmentary Demand' in *The Power of Contestation: Perspectives on Maurice Blanchot* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 109.
[37] Lesie Hill considers Blanchot as the most extreme contemporary. See Leslie Hill, *Blanchot, Extreme Contemporary* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

the heterogeneous relation and the 'distanciation' proposed by Borges and Blanchot, the relation that works to bring about the renewing of the work of art.

It can be argued that Kafka was writing at a time at which language had arrived at a crisis of representation. Ihab Habib Hassan, in his reading of modernism in a chronological order of historical record, documents those literary figures who are engaged with this crisis of language. Hassan includes Sade, Mallarmé, Valéry, Kafka, and Beckett in what he calls 'the literature of silence.' The silence:

> creates anti-languages. Some are utterly opaque, other completely transparent. These languages transform the presence of words into semantic absence and unloosen the grammar of consciousness. They accuse common speech.[38]

Kafka is among figures who are engaged with the silence instead of the meaning that language conveys. Kafka lets the silence speak and reveal the semantic absence in language. We can compare this silence with Heidegger's concept of Gerede ('idle talk') which signifies the empty or hollow repetition that affirms this semantic absence in language. Gerede:

> does not communicate in such a way as to let this entity [what the discourse is about] be appropriated in a primordial manner, but communicates rather by following the route of gossiping and passing the word along. Things are so because one says so. Idle talk is constituted by such gossiping and passing the word along - a process by which its initial lack of grounds to stand on become aggravated to complete groundlessness.[39]

Everything that we learn and hear about is presented to us as already understood as passed along without any authority. Things are shown not in themselves in their 'primordial' state; they are what the idle talk represents. The idle talk is groundless because it does not present things in primordial state, in and of itself.

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[38] Ihab Habib Hassan, *The Dismemberment of Orpheus: Toward a Postmodern Literature* (Wisconsin: The university of Wisconsin Press, 1982), p. 13.
[39] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (India: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 212.

Kafka's aphorisms during the months he spent in Zürau from October 1917 to February 1918 and the months of January and February 1920[40] show his awareness of the crisis of language in terms of the impossibility of authentic expression, and of distinguishing truth and lies in fixed utterances:

> Language can be used only very obliquely of things outside the physical world, not even metaphorically, since all it knows to do - according to the nature of the physical world - is to treat of ownership and its relation.[41]

Language is unable to give knowledge of the things outside; it only knows their relations not themselves. This passage could be explained according to Blanchot's consideration of the 'transformation' of the thing into language.[42] For Blanchot, language appropriates and possesses the thing; it kills the thing by representing it. Blanchot calls this transformation naming:

> Naming is too imposing.[43]

The act of 'imposing' could be what Kafka calls the act of 'ownership.' Such treatment of language only shows the relation of things together not things in themselves.

His aphorisms align him with his contemporary thinkers such as Kraus and Wittgenstein. These two thinkers turned aphorism as a genre into a weapon against the representational function of language. According to Richard T. Gray who writes about aphoristic writers in Kafka's time:

> This belief in the creative potential of language, its ability to create out of itself and yet to unearth an unsuspected truthfulness, is central to the aphoristic production of writers as Kraus and Wittgenstein.[44]

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[40] Richard T. Gray, *Construction Destruction* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1987), p. 124.
[41] Franz Kafka, *The Zürau Aphorism*, trans. by Michael Hofman (London: Harvil Secker, 2006), p. 58.
[42] Adorno has developed the idea of objectification in relation to material reality and sociology. Tia DeNora explains that 'Adorno's critique of reason centers on the idea that material reality is more complex than the ideas and concepts available for describing it. Reality by which Adorno meant not only nature but also the specificity of lived experience cannot be fully addressed by words, measurements, concepts, and categories.' Objectification, for Adorno, 'involved assumptions about the nature of things as general types, assumption which, if acted upon, abolished proximate experience of things.' Tia DeNora, *After Adorno: Rethinking Music Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 4-6.
[43] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 50. Benjamin also argues that the knowledge produced by representation is possession. See *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. by John Osborn (London: verso, 2003), p. 29.

What is implicit in the creative power of language in aphorism is that it creates a distance between the meaning of an utterance and the utterance itself in order that writing become the space which no longer represents but lets everything appear as it is. In this sense, writing labors by undoing everything. Kafka uses aphorism in order to be directed toward the autonomy of language that undoes being. This new power of language calls into question being and reveals the mode of it that has been proposed by Blanchot as 'worklessness:'

> It is a region anterior to the beginning where nothing is made of being, and in which nothing is accomplished. It is the depth of being's inertia.[45]

The region of worklessness [*desoeuvrement*] is the neutral neither/nor space before being that never arrives in any complete form of being of the thing. What makes this act possible is the 'other' which is always unknown and in the process of coming. The 'worklessness' produces the space in which the heterogeneous relations among entities are activated (the same as the relation between *A* and *B* discussed before in Blanchot). This relation brings about the distance between the constituents of an entity and prevents the unity and identity. According to this relation, being becomes nothing but only the relation between constituents; this is a system like the 'rhizome' in Deleuze which removes the possibility of a center and reciprocal relation of constituents.[46] Literature becomes the space for 'worklessness,' the act of undoing by activating the heterogeneous relationship within one entity and among entities.

Regarding the creative power of language that Blanchot sees as an operation of 'worklessness,' Kafka, in his letter to Felice, writes about the independency of writing and self-forgetfulness:

> Simply to race through the nights with my pen, that's what I want. And to perish by it, or lose my reason, that's what I want too, since it is inevitable and long-anticipated consequence.[47]

When control is surrendered to writing, it has the creative power which gives existence to the writer. Writing becomes the space where an interruption occurs in being. Foucault writes

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[44] Richard T. Gray, *Construction Destruction*, p. 130.
[45] Maurice Blanchot, 'Mallarme's Experience' in *The Space of Literature*, trans. by Ann Smock, p. 46. I discuss the notion of 'worklessness' in first chapter.
[46] Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi, p. 21.
[47] Franz Kafka, *Letters to Felice*, ed. by Erich Heller and Jurgen Born, trans. by James Stern and Elizabeth Duckworth (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 411.

about it as the thought from outside. The 'outside' in Foucault's meaning signifies what always comes out in the rupture between the inside/outside. Everything presents itself as:

> nothingness beyond all being: thought from outside.[48]

Everything including the empty 'I' enter into relation with the 'other,' or what Foucault calls the 'outside.' It is the exposure to the 'other' or the 'outside' through writing that situates being in a state of 'betweenness'; as Kafka writes in one of his aphorisms:

> He is a free and secure citizen of the world because he is on a chain that is long enough to allow him access to all parts of the earth, and yet not so long that he could be swept over the edge of it. At the same time he is also a free and secure citizen of heaven because he is also attached to a similar heavenly chain. If he wants to go earth, the heavenly manacles will throttle him, if he wants to go to heaven, the earthly manacles will. But for all that, all possibilities are open to him, as he is well aware, yes, he even refuses to believe the whole thing is predicated on a mistake going back to the time of his first enchainment.[49]

The aphorism suggests that the state of 'betweenness' which Kafka lives in is open while he is stuck between the two directions. The mode of being in this middle situation could be conceived as only the relation between the two sides, neither heaven nor earth. The act of writing reveals that being is not a separate and unified form but it is only a 'relation.' This reminds us of what Blanchot calls 'the relation itself' which characterizes writing:

> We could say that the Other, this 'Other' in play in the third kind of relation, is no longer one of its terms; it is neither one nor the other, being nothing other than relation itself.[50]

The 'other' enters as the result of the heterogeneous relation between the two sides and makes the nonreciprocal relation, 'the third kind.' The inherent consequence is that 'the relation itself' only remains. The 'other' would be 'the relation itself,' the perpetual approach of the two

[48] Michel Foucault, 'Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside' in *Foucault, Blanchot*, trans. by Jeffrey Mehlman and Brian Massumi (New York: Zone Books, 1997), p. 16.
[49] Franz Kafka, *The Zürau Aphorism*, p. 66.
[50] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, P. 73.

sides. This situation also implies the 'betweenness' of the human who is suspended between his knowledge of himself and the outside world and what really he is and the outside world are. Richard T. Gray comments that, for Kafka,

> the split between abstract knowledge and the practical realm of lived experience is absolute.[51]

Kafka wishes to have existence by writing in order to move from abstract knowledge to the realm of lived experience. This realm presents itself as the 'betweenness' or the space of 'worklessness.' I will explain Blanchot's view of literature as 'worklessness' in the first chapter and pay equally close attention to this view in the second chapter on Kafka's *The Castle* to argue for the state of 'betweenness.'

What can develop the notion of the 'other' in the act of writing is Kafka's struggle to establish a sense of selfhood through writing. The formation of self and having an identity based on the self by writing is problematic for Kafka, since in the process of self-formation the act of writing unwillingly allows the 'other' into the self. Accordingly, Kafka defines literature as an autonomous entity that replies to the call of the 'other.'[52] He is of great importance in addressing this issue in his own time. The other aspect of Blanchot's notion of literature considers the writer's role as the mediator through which literature or art presents itself. According to Blanchot, through art's presentation, the writer loses his identity and the possibility of configuring the selfhood which he supposes as the origin of literature. At the same time, literature acts upon the writer's self and puts it in the process of becoming. This view of the author illuminates Kafka.

To reply to the call of the 'other' in literature, Kafka enters into conflict with empirical life in the sense that he rejects his empirical life to exchange it for writing. The replacement reveals that he forgets his empirical life; as he writes in his diary:

> We others, we, indeed, are held in our past and future […] whatever advantage the future has in size, the past compensate for in weight, and at their end the two are indeed no longer distinguishable, earliest youth later becomes distinct,

[51] Richard T. Gray, *Construction Destruction*, p. 146.

[52] The notion of 'the other' is brought up by Emmanuel Levinas as the rejection of the cognitive act of the ego that reduces all otherness to itself. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. by Alphons Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969); *Existence and Existents*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1978).

> as the future is, and the end of the future is really already experienced in all our sighs, and thus becomes the past. So this circle along whose rim we move almost closes. If we move to the side just once, in any chance forgetting of self, in some distraction, some fright, we have already lost it into space, until now we had our noses stuck into the tide of the times, now we step back, former swimmers, present walker, and are lost. We are outside the law, no one knows it and yet everyone treats us accordingly.[53]

In this phrase, 'any chance forgetting of self,' we see the loss of ego by which writing establishes itself. In this way, the possibility of the sense of selfhood is removed when writing becomes possible. The self no longer represents the outside world by means of writing; it empties the self of all its reflection on the outside world. This is the anti-social and philosophical effect of writing. According to Nietzsche in *The Gay Science*, the artist has the ability to go beyond the self and leave behind the influence of social concepts which restricts our place in the world:

> Only they have taught us the art of viewing ourselves as hero- from a distance- the art of staging and watching ourselves…it taught man to see himself from a distance and as something past and whole.[54]

The viewing of the self from a distance means to forget the self as something complete which does not need to be rethought. Art, by putting the self on the stage and observing it, creates it anew by going beyond it. Art makes a distance and difference within the self that removes the possibility of its formation. The diary entry which I quoted above from Kafka has been written on July19, 1910. Kafka writes 'The Judgment' after this diary entry in one sitting during the night of September 22nd-23rd, 1912. What is crucial for Kafka is the way this story is written:

> Only in this way can writing be done with such a complete opening out of my body and soul.[55]

[53] Franz Kafka, *The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1910-1913*, vol. I, ed. by Max Brod, trans. by Joseph Kresh (New York: Schocken, 1949), p. 27.
[54] Friedrich Nietzsche *The Gay Science*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), p. 133.
[55] Franz Kafka, *The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1910-1913*, p. 276.

The phrase 'complete opening' implies the transformation of Kafka into writing entirely. He is at that moment confident of the fulfillment of writing; for him,

> the indubitability of the story was confirmed.[56]

Some years after writing this story, Kafka experiences existence in writing. While writing *The Trial* in 1914, Kafka notes in a diary entry for August 15:

> I have been writing these past few days, may it continue. Today I am not so completely protected by and enclosed in my work as I was two years ago, [the composition of 'The Judgment']; nevertheless have the feeling that my monotonous, empty, mad bachelor's life has some justification. I can once more carry on a conversation with myself, and don't stare so into complete emptiness. Only in this way is there any possibility of improvement for me.[57]

Kafka's feeling of being 'so completely protected by' his writing implies that his being is nothing but writing which is compatible with the 'monotonous, empty, mad bachelor's life.' Stanley Corngold, who has engaged himself with reading Kafka, argues that the bachelor's life' is the disappearance of the empirical life:

> The condition of this dissolution is a withdrawal from the flux of life. And the code word for this withdrawal, as its necessary condition, is the 'bachelor.'[58]

The conversation with his empirical life is characterized as looking into the emptiness. There should be a distinction between being-in-writing and the emptiness of the life in the world. Kafka has emptied himself of empirical life and has been transformed into a being-in-writing. This being-in-writing can be confirmed in his letter to Felice, his fiancée:

> I do not have literary interests; rather I am made out of literature, I am nothing

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[56] Franz Kafka, p. 278.
[57] Franz Kafka, *The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1914-1923*, vol. II, ed. by Max Brod, trans. by Joseph Kresh (New York: Schocken, 1949), p. 79.
[58] Stanley Corngold, *Lambent Traces, Franz Kafka* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 27. He has written also *Franz Kafka, The necessity of Form* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988); 'Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*: Metamorphosis of Metaphor' in Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis: the Translation, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*, trans and ed. by Stanley Corngold (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996); 'Kafka and the Ministry of Writing' in *Franz Kafka: The Office Writings*, ed. by Stanley Corngold, Jack Greenberg, and Benno Wagner, trans. by Eric Patton with Ruth Hein (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009); *The Commentator's Despair: The Interpretation of Kafka's Metamorphosis* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1973); *The Fate of the Self: German Writers and French Theory* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1994).

and cannot be anything else.[59]

The act of writing by which the 'other' is called upon will be the focus of the third chapter.

In order to consider further the entering of the 'other' through writing, I push further the argument of the last chapter by describing the death concept in Blanchot which is defined as the 'process of dying' not just a single instant. In chapter four, I bring together a short text by Blanchot, *The Instant of My Death*, and one by Kafka, *The Metamorphosis*. In Blanchot's view, the writer undergoes the ongoing process of dying by writing. This notion of death and its impossibility can be described as the always already ongoing process of the self's intrication with 'alterity' which makes self and identity disappear. The act of writing is made possible by entering the author into this 'process of dying.' In fact, writing makes death impossible because the work places the writer in the impossibility of death, the dying process being an oscillation between being and nothingness. As Blanchot writes,

> the work demands the man who writes it to sacrifice himself for the work, become other - not other than the living man he was, the writer with his duties, his satisfactions, and his interests, but he must become no one, the empty and animated space where the call of the work resounds.[60]

The state of dying which is demanded by the work is the neutrality of being no one. The writer does not sacrifice himself in order to arrive at transcendental being. The transformation effected by writing deprives the writer of any sort of being and places him in a dying process by which he is capable of neither being nor non-being:

> Between being and nothingness, [he is] incapable henceforth of dying and incapable of being born.[61]

The metamorphosis of Gregor, the protagonist of *The Metamorphosis*, or the dying process of Kafka- the writer- into the state of being no one which is demanded by the work means that the self engages with the 'other' ('the empty and animated space where the call of the work resounds'). This transformation articulates the dispossession of any closed and fixed structure of the self. In other words, the closure of the self will be impossible. The self gets no determination, completion, and totality and at the same time it will not be reducible to

[59] Franz Kafka, *Letters to Felice*, p. 428.
[60] Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, trans. by Charlotte Mandel (California: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 215-16.
[61] Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, p. 216.

disappearance. It endures the condition of neither/nor in the dying process, neither born nor death.

Regarding the preceding chapters about the 'spacing' in writing and the entering of 'the other' by the act of writing, I will try to develop these ideas by reading Kafka's and Blanchot's fictions through what Blanchot calls *récit*. The fifth and sixth chapters try to illustrate the notion of *récit* as the non-narrative entity outside of narratology. This notion is dominated by 'the other.' Simply speaking, 'the other' is illustrated in the *récit*. To clarify this point, we can say the *récit* happens outside memory completely in the sense that memory is no longer perceived as the place of past experience. For Blanchot, it is because what is called the present does not pass and we live always in this present in which there is neither presence nor absence. This implies the absence of a being in a unified entity which passes from the past to present and goes into the future. Being does not come to presence. Therefore, it is illusory that the past is filled with events in associative chains of meaning or narrative organization**.** Therefore, the *récit* neither narrates the past nor the present; it actually illustrates the impossibility of narration.

In order to clarify this signification**,** I will discuss how the act of recounting an event may refer to the futile intellectual attentiveness involved in recalling the past, as Proust believes and calls the *voluntary* memory (the voluntary memory is the memory of intelligence and reason. It gives us only a partial, repetitive, isolated image of the events of our past).[62] Or the recounting of the past may refer to *involuntary* memory. Voluntary memory as the function of intelligence cannot recall the past by the will. What works in the intelligence and reason to recall the past is consciousness that has no trace of the past. Walter Benjamin also discusses this voluntary memory by referring to the word 'information' [63] which implies the absence of the experience of the past in voluntary memory which is the function of the intelligence or consciousness. Rejecting voluntary memory in Proust, Benjamin believes that an individual cannot form an image of himself or he cannot hold of his experience. Proust's work, *In Search of Lost Time,* suggests that an individual is isolated in many ways and cannot have recollection of the isolated self. According to Benjamin, the reason is that:

[62] Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, trans. by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, vol. I (New York: Modern Library, 1992), p. 59.
[63] Walter Benjamin, 'Storyteller' in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Fontana Press, 1973), p. 88.

> man's inner concerns do not have their issueless private character by nature. They do so only when he is increasingly unable to assimilate the data of the world around him by way of experience.[64]

In this view, the self is not a fixed identity. In this chaotic self, the past as the place for voluntary memory is impossible to be recollected in narrative mode. The recollection of the scattered self is impossible. The assimilation of the 'other' into the self is the attempt to form an identity. If we translate this notion of memory in Proust into Blanchot's language, we see that Blanchot believes that the act of recalling loses its meaning in terms of having a memory and a past in the narrative mode. Memory becomes the place of forgetting in which neither remembering nor forgetting happens as if:

> memory were of everyone, forgetting of no one.[65]

Events which have occurred to someone in the past may or may not belong to him. These events seem to belong to everyone. It implies that there is a collective memory which cannot be split into specific sections. In other words, there is no boundary between people's memory. This can be said that the past events are neither recollected nor forgotten.

Blanchot considers the absence of any foundation in memory (memory is empty) and the state between being and non-being in relation to his notion of primal scene in *The Writing of the Disaster* by which he tries to differentiate himself from Freud. The primal scene is not pure origin but it is opened to other prior primal scenes. Blanchot, in a fragment, depicts the picture of the primal scene that precedes the formation of the first person, of the 'I' confident in his or her powers, who is capable of remembering and forgetting. In this sense, Blanchot's primal scene rejects the construction of single subject for 'I'. When the 'I' is not able to construct a single subject because of the endless primal scenes, the 'I' cannot recollect the past in narrative mode. The endless primal scenes also imply that the 'I' is open to the 'other' and lives in the state of 'becoming.' In other words, the primal scene presents the 'other' and the state of 'becoming' which signifies the impossibility repeating the past in narrative mode. Blanchot's *Madness of the Day* (1949) is an illustration of this discussion.

As I discussed, the *récit* is not the repetition of the past but the unrepeatability of telling a story. These points were illustrated in terms of memory and the primal scene in

[64] Walter Benjamin, 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire' in *Charles Baudelaire, A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. by Harry Zohn, p. 112.
[65] Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, p. 10.

Blanchot's view and his text *The Madness of the Day* (1949). In chapter seven, I look at *The Trial (1920)* of Kafka while thinking Blanchot's *récit*. The trial in *The Trial* presents the absence of origin, past and memory, and the impossibility of narrative as Joseph K., the hero, wants to open the trial to the 'other' and 'becoming.' The law tries to totalize his being by imposing a narrative on it, but K. sees his being in the trial of transgression and crossing limits. These are characteristics of the *récit* (discussed in Blanchot) which Kafka presents them in his trial. *The Trial*'s narrative form, characters, and narrative voice are areas on which I focus to illustrate these characteristics.

What characterizes *The Trial* as a *récit* could be: unfinished chapters which are independently single chapters; no chronological order of events in chapters and the absence of the consistency between time and place within them; no pre-existent story for the narration that makes the text independent from anything outside of itself; and the way of K.'s trial suspends narration and does not progress from one event to another. It problematizes the concept of repetition. No narrative theory can be applied to this text in terms of representing a story. The text illustrates only the deferral of K.'s case in the trial. In this récit, K. goes from place to place after his arrest to make progress in his case. Every chapter is a commentary by a commentator about the law and trial. By removing any originary state or teleological existence, the text is open to the 'other,' the new possibilities of being written and read endlessly.

In the relationship of self and the 'other' which occurs in the act of writing, a sort of self-criticism is implicated. The self is involved with criticizing itself which causes it to disappear. When the self criticizes itself in the act of writing it does not mean that the self shatters itself to disappear; the self opens itself to call upon 'the other' to make the community in which being is no longer individuated. Being exists in 'the other.' Blanchot proposes the being-in-the other in *Unavowable Community* to reject the traditional system of community as the communion of people who lose themselves inside a totality in movement.[66] Blanchot develops the idea of 'the community of the other' to criticize the traditional community because it aims at the search for belonging and the cultural construction of identity, the self versus the other.[67] Blanchot claims that 'the community of the other' is possible by writing that is the making of relation between two others; such writing does not set the self against

[66] Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community* trans. by Pierre Joris (New York: Station Hill Press, 1988), p. 7.
[67] Gerard Delanty, *Community* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. xii.

the other but brings about the community of the two others in a heterogeneous relationship by which they are created anew. The community in such writing, for Blanchot, is:

> the search for the last words: 'Come, come you for whom the injunction, the prayer, the expectation is not appropriate.'[68]

I will argue that Kafka in 'Josefine, the Singer or The Mouse People' illustrates 'the community of the other.' Josefine, the protagonist of the story, is characterized as the anti-hero who challenges the totalitarian and nationalist community. The female gender of Josefine reminds us of Blanchot's idea of femininity in *Unavowable Community* that is qualified as excess and transgression. Josefine as the singer is connected to femininity and this implies the association between art and femininity or art and excess.

[68] Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, p. 12.

Chapter 1

Literature in Blanchot: Worklessness as Spacing between Word and Its Referent

I begin my argument (how does writing open the space for the 'other?') with Blanchot. Although he comes after Kafka, I start with him for two reasons. First, he is one of the deconstructive thinkers in France who has both theorized deconstruction and written fictions, including three full-length novels, and ten or more short narratives, in which he has practiced his theorization; other major French deconstructive figures such as Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, and Emmanuel Levinas have only theoretical discussions. Moreover, Blanchot has devoted his intellectual life to the relation between literature and philosophy, writing and thought. He has renewed the critical debates concerning the ontological status of literature and art. This chapter explains Blanchot's theoretical discussion about literature and writing in order to read it with Kafka in the next chapter.

Second, as I mentioned in the introduction, according to Benjamin, the work is created by its 'afterlife,' including its dialogue with other works.[69] The meaning of 'creation' is that Kafka's works make known that a text is not closed upon itself but it is open to be unfolded and in communication with other texts in the past and future. Blanchot, similar to Benjamin, writes that after the work finishes:

> for him [the writer] the work has disappeared, it has become a work belonging to other people. The work exists only when it has become this public, alien reality, made and unmade by colliding with other realities.[70]

Kafka's work is both 'unmade' and 'made' - that is to say, it becomes other than itself or is created when it is read with other works. As Blanchot writes, it is the public that is writing. The 'public' includes people and writers who live after the work is written. The possibility of the work's existence will be guaranteed by the alterity or the 'other' that the 'alien reality' invents in the future. The etymology of the word 'alien' in *OED* is related to 'other' or

[69] See my argument in the Introduction about the truth content and the material content in Benjamin. See Walter Benjamin, 'Goethe's Elective Affinities' in *Selected Writing: Volume 1, 1913-1926* ed. by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 297.
[70] Maurice Blanchot, 'Literature and the Right to Death' in *The Gaze of Orpheus*, trans. by Lydia Davis (New York: Station Hill Press, 1981), p. 26.

'belonging to another person.' When the work finishes, it belongs to another person, to the 'other.

Regarding the dialogue of works together and how one work belongs to another work, I will give an example: Blanchot in his essay, 'Kafka and Literature,' quotes Kafka as the one who has disintegrated the self to live in writing. Blanchot in the essay quotes from a diary entry on February 1911:

> When I arbitrarily write a sentence, for instance, 'he looked out of window,'
> it has already perfection.[71]

This sentence for Blanchot is important because it is already complete without considering an author for it or something that is referred to; this sentence also shows that the independency of the sentence itself creates the author. Therefore, Blanchot writes:

> he looked out of the window' to be more than himself.[72]

This sentence, for Blanchot, explains the act of writing which is the origin of itself and the writer as well. The writer writes in order that writing creates him, i.e. 'to be more than himself.' Writing or literature, for Blanchot, is the space in which the writer and the reader are created, where the 'other' as the possibility of invention enters. This notion of literature proposed by Blanchot in his reading of Kafka shows the 'creation' of two works through dialogue.

For Benjamin, in the essay 'Franz Kafka, On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death' this creation means the extension of the past into the present and the future. He pays attention to this point in Kafka:

> To believe in progress is not to believe that progress has already taken place. Kafka did not consider the age in which he lived as an advance over the beginnings of time. The fact that it is now forgotten does not mean that it does not extend in to the present.[73]

[71] Franz Kafka, *The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1910-1913*, vol. I, ed. by Max Brod, trans. by Joseph Kresh (New York: Schocken, 1949), p. 45.
[72] Maurice Blanchot, 'Kafka and Literature' in *The Siren's Song*, ed. by Gabriel Josipovici, trans. by Sacha Rabinovich (Sussex: The Harvester Press Limited, 1982), p. 34.

Benjamin implies that a piece of thought in the past is not an entity that should be forgotten because its time has passed and it has nothing new to say. The past is not defined by what has happened; the advance of the past thought be accomplished by the present. This shows the richness of the past that unfolds itself. Accordingly, Benjamin believes that Kafka's age is not more advanced than his past and this past extends into the present. Thinking of Benjamin concerning my argument, Blanchot is the reader who creates Kafka 'after' him in the sense that a piece of thought emerges in the past and must advance in the future. If I read Blanchot in the first place, it reveals Kafka's richness in his thought. Moreover, the creation of his 'afterlife' by Blanchot will not be known if we read him before Blanchot. Thus, reading Blanchot in the first place becomes necessary in order to understand Kafka.

The 'creation' of an 'afterlife' implies also that Blanchot or any reader is part of Kafka's work and, in a sense, writes his work. Paul de Man in his essay 'Autobiography as De-Facement' argues that generally when someone writes or reads a text, he himself is the subject of what he writes or reads. The autobiography, for de Man, would be the place in which someone writes or read himself. In this sense, all texts are autobiographical:

> Autobiography, then, is not a genre or a mode, but a figure of reading or of understanding that occurs, to some degree, in all texts.[74]

In de Man's notion of autobiography at the moment when someone is in specular relation with himself there occurs a mutual reflexive substitution within the self. The substitution destabilizes the constitution of the self, since the self undergoes a transformation while he reads himself. This process occurs in Kafka: when he writes he is made of literature:

> I am made out of literature; I am nothing and cannot be anything else.[75]

Writing transforms him into something other than himself. Writing and reading become one thing defined as the 'creation.' In other words, we speak of the act of creation named as 'writing.' The main implication of the 'writing' is that a written work does not belong to the past and the reading of the work does not occur in the future, since the 'creation' removes the distinction of the time-sequence for writing and reading; any time that we write or read, we

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[73] Walter Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka, On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death' in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn, p. 126.
[74] Paul De Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 70.
[75] Franz Kafka, *Letters to Felice*, ed. by Erich Hellex and Jurgen Born, trans. by James Stern and Elizabeth Duckworth (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 428.

are in the act of 'creation' or the 'writing.' This means that the reader becomes outdated and anachronistic; that is to say, he is not the one who lives 'after' the work that he reads. This removal of a time-sequence allows us to consider Blanchot not merely as a writer who lived 'after' Kafka. By this view which sees writing and reading as always anachronistic, my reading of Blanchot before Kafka shows how they are actually the writers of one ongoing work.

Kafka has transformed himself into literature in writing his diaries, aphorism, letters, and fiction as he writes in his letter to his fiancée, Felice:

> I am made out of literature; I am nothing and cannot be anything else.[76]

If we think of the sentence that Blanchot quotes from Kafka that says: 'he looked out of the window' to be more than himself,' we begin to understand when Kafka says that 'I am made of literature.' When Kafka writes he loses his identity and becomes more than himself, he becomes the 'other.' When he writes he is literature, i.e., the 'other.' It is in contrast with Descartes' famous sentence 'I think, therefore I am.' For Descartes, it is an 'I' which experiences and its structural characteristic is *res cogitans*, the unifying center as a substance, a constant bearer of certain attributes.[77] When Kafka becomes literature, his existence is not cognition; he belongs to writing, the 'other,' which is other than the 'I' as the unified center. Writing transforms the 'I' into the 'other.' Blanchot's writings also circle around the question and the specific challenge that literature poses to thought.[78] This leads me to explain, in this chapter, how Blanchot understands literature and illustrate, in the next chapter, how this view creates Kafka's 'afterlife.'

In order to explain how Blanchot views literature, first I argue that Blanchot considers literature as the act of questioning of being. For this purpose, I will discuss how, for Blanchot, language, by apparently representing the thing in nature, makes it absent. Language's function in this making absent is the negation of the thing in nature. I will continue to say that in Blanchot's argument, literature which becomes a new language finds a new power outside its representational function by which it questions being. By this new power, literature itself gives being. Second, I explain how language is transformed into the void that is neither something nor nothing; how language in its new power becomes the

[76] Franz Kafka, *Letters to Felice*, p. 428.
[77] René Descartes, 'Meditations on the First Philosophy' in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes*, vol., trans. by Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T. Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).
[78] Ullrich Hasse, and William Large, *Maurice Blanchot* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 2.

medium that lets the thing return and appear in itself, i.e., as neither representation nor manifestation. This could be the act of making new possibilities or the invention of the 'other.'[79] In Blanchot's notion of literature, the thing returns outside the category of presence/absence and the definition of being/non-being. It means that being is characterized as the neither/nor condition. Blanchot expresses this condition as 'worklessness' [*desoeuvrement*].

Literature and the Question of Being

Blanchot, in 'Literature and the Right to Death,' a text in which he develops the notion of literature, argues that literature should rethink and question itself and everything that it deals with:

> This question is addressed to language, behind the person who is writing and the person who is reading, by language which has become literature.[80]

Language questions itself in order to release itself from its function as representation. Blanchot, here, implies that language, for him, becomes literature. He writes:

> Let us suppose that literature begins at the moment when literature becomes a question.[81]

Blanchot in this essay argues that language has the ability to name a thing outside itself in the world and sets it aside to represent it. Then, the word becomes the thing itself. Language thus kills and brings death to everything that it refers to. Blanchot writes of this process:

> When I say, 'this woman,' real death has been announced and is already present in my language; my language means that this person, who is here right now, can be detached from herself, removed from her existence and her presence and suddenly plunged into a nothingness in which there is no existence or presence; my language essentially signifies the possibility of this destruction. Therefore, it is accurate to say that when I speak: death speaks in me.[82]

[79] Derrida argues that the invention of the other is the only possibility; the other as the impossibility is the only possibility. See Jacques Derrida, *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Vol.1*, ed. by Peggy Kamuf, and Elizabeth Rottenberg (California: Stanford University Press, 2007).
[80] Maurice Blanchot, 'Literature and the Right to Death' in *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 21.
[81] Maurice Blanchot, p. 21.

Here, Blanchot suggests that language negates and annihilates everything outside itself. This annihilation is implied as death of the material where meaning becomes the material itself. The making absent of the thing by language in itself has been also discussed by Derrida. He calls this negativity linguistic negativity:

> Speech is the ideal nullification of external. Language then is immediately universal language that destroys within itself natural language.[83]

Linguistic negativity imposes silence on the thing in the world by emptying, 'nullifying,' its being and replacing it with the word. In this sense, this is language gives being to the thing by destroying it; language makes the thing absent.[84] For Blanchot, this is considered as the first slope of literature.

Leslie Hill discusses this death of the thing as the possibility of humanity; that is to say, the human comes to existence by negating the world outside himself:

> Death is the source of the negativity that separates sign from object and by making language possible makes both humanity and literature possible.[85]

A human gathers its being by conceptualizing anything outside itself by language. The independent conceptualization which negates the thing outside separates the sign from the object. This conceptualization becomes human existence.[86] In reaction to this death that makes the thing disappear, Blanchot speaks of Jean Paulhan who tries to arrive in the immediate truth which he calls 'Terror.' This 'Terror' shows the discontinuity of the perceived

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[82] Maurice Blanchot, 'Literature and the Right to Death' in *The Gaze of Orpheus*, pp. 42-43. Blanchot, here, criticizes what Hegel means by language and how language makes the thing in nature absent. For the similar argument in Hegel, see Alexander Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, ed. by Allan Bloom, trans. by James H. Nicholas, Jr. (New York, London: Basic Books, 1969), p. 141. For further reading on Hegel, see Stephen Houlgate, *An Introduction to Hegel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005); and Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

[83] Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, trans. by John P. Leavey, Jr, and Richard Rand (Lincoln and London: The University of Nebraska Press, 1990), pp. 8-9.

[84] Walter Benjamin writes on language as the overnaming of nature after God's naming. Nature begins to lament because it has been muted by language. See Walter Benjamin, 'On Language as Such' in *Selected Writings*, trans. by Rodney Livingston and Others, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, Volume 1(Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 72-3.

[85] Leslie Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 113.

[86] Kojeve reads Hegel's process of concept-making and the death of the thing via the example of the word 'dog.' See Alexander Kojeve, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, p. 141.

immediate link between the word and thought in order to dethrone the reign of the single meaning that the word signifies. [87]

After the example of 'this woman' in the first slope of literature, Blanchot describes the second slope in which two movements occur:

> Literature has triumphed over the meaning of words, but what it has found in words considered apart from their meaning is meaning that has become thing: and thus it is meaning detached from its conditions, separated from its moments, wandering like empty power without power, a power no one can do anything with, a power without power, the simple inability to cease to be, but which, because of that, appears to be the proper determination of indeterminate and meaningless existence.[88]

In this slope, first, the meaning of word becomes the thing. Then, the meaning or the concept that the human makes of the thing releases itself from the word, since the thing itself is absent. Kevin Hart writes about this point:

> Released from the concept's grip, literature shakes itself free of death as shaping force and in that movement renders negativity unemployed. Literature will have no work to do - or, if you prefer, its work will *be* this nothing.[89]

By this emptying, the meaning loses its power in representing the thing, since the meaning is separated from the word and the thing. Thus, it neither represents the thing nor is the signification for the word. In this 'wandering situation,' it presents nothing. The meaning becomes meaningless. Literature by using language makes this situation in order to present the thing, but it destroys signification and refers neither to the thing nor to its meaning. It only refers to itself. In other words, if this movement stops here, as Leslie Hill explains, language becomes the sonorous echo of words released from the obligation to mean.[90] Blanchot considers this as the first version of the image:

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[87] Maurice Blanchot, 'How Is Literature Possible?' in *Faux Pas*, ed. by Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, trans. by Charlotte Mandell (California: Stanford University Press, 2001). On Blanchot and Paulhan relationship, also see Allen Stoekl, 'Paulhan and Blanchot: On Rhetoric, Terror, and the Gaze of Orpheus' in *Agonies of the Intellectual* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), pp. 145-73.
[88] Maurice Blanchot, 'Literature and the Right to Death' in *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 50.
[89] Kevin Hart, *The Dark Gaze* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 86. I will discuss the 'nothingness' in chapter five on the primal scene and 'il y a' in Levinas.
[90] Leslie Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 112.

> Sometimes it [the image] gives us the power to control things in their absence and through fiction, thus maintaining us in a domain rich with meaning.[91]

Here, language becomes the thing itself by making the thing and the meaning absent. Ullrich Hasse explains that when a poet names 'a horse,' he does not aim at evoking the image of a horse in our minds. His aim is not to make the words disappear behind successful communication of the image. Rather, the more successful the poem, the more powerfully the words stand in front of us and sound in our ears, and not the horse. Literature in this meaning, according to Hasse, prevents us from accessing to the world:

> Language inscribes the distance that separates us from the reality of the world.[92]

According to Blanchot, from the independency of language in which meaning becomes meaningless, that is to say, signification is removed from it, language must transform into the 'neutrality' where literature becomes possible. This is the second movement of the second slope. Leslie Hill summarizes what literature seeks in this movement:

> Indeed, Blanchot argues, what literature, in its turn, seeks as its object or goal is not the reality of world as limply described by language, nor is it the pure concept brought into being by the annihilation of things by words, nor it the sonorous echo of words released from the obligation to mean, but something more radical and originary still, since it is the very condition of these other operations: the pre-conceptual singularity of things as they were before their destruction by words.[93]

Hector Kollias who explains the two slopes of literature in Blanchot writes that literature in this state of nothingness or what Hill expresses as 'the pre-conceptual singularity of things' seeks the 'existence before the day:'

> It is, to cite Blanchot 'existence before the day,' existence predating the necessary conditions of possibility for existence, existence in the absence

[91] Blanchot, Maurice, *The Space of Literature*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 263.
[92] Ullrich Hass and William Large, *Maurice Blanchot*, p. 61.
[93] Leslie Hill, *Blanchot: Extreme Contemporary*, p. 112.

of its own horizon.[94]

In Blanchot' notion of literature, the existence of the thing should be presented before the day, i.e., existence before destruction by words. The expression 'before the day' implies that the thing is not illuminated in itself by words; they must become the 'space' so that the thing could present itself. In this 'space,' Blanchot writes, when the writer describes something,

> it is the thing itself that describes itself.[95]

The state in which the thing describes itself as the pre-conceptual singularity is explained as what Blanchot calls 'parentheses:'

> All Mallarme's researches tends to find a boundary where, by means of terms nonetheless fixed and directed at facts and things, a perspective of parentheses might be sketched out, each opening out into each to infinity and endlessly escaping themselves.[96]

This passage which explains Mallarmé's literature implies that things are not what human has conceptualized and words no longer represent them. Things stay in parentheses, in a distance from words and human conceptualization. The point about 'parentheses' reminds us of Husserl's 'epoche' or 'transcendental reduction' which puts objects outside of consciousness itself so that one could ground the knowledge of the world in the lived experience without, in the process, reducing the content of that knowledge to the contingent and subjective features of that experience. [97] Blanchot compares the 'neutrality' of the 'parentheses' with 'epoche' in phenomenology in order to leave open the reduction:

> It [the literary act] would itself be reduced engaging in nothing other than simulating a reduction of the reduction, whether or not this be phenomenological; and thus, far from annulling this reduction, it would rather, following the interminable, increase it by all that disperses it and

[94] Hector Kollias, 'A Matter of Life and Death' in *After Blanchot: Literature, Criticism, Philosophy*, ed. by Leslie Hill, Brian Nelson, Dimitris Vardoulakis (Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 2005), p. 129.
[95] Maurice Blanchot, 'Literature and the Right to Death' in *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 52.
[96] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Myth of Mallarmé' in *The Work of Fire*, trans. by Charlotte Mandell (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 33.
[97] See Hubert L. Dreyfus, and Mark A. Wrathall, *A Companion to Phenomenology and Existentialism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), p. 2.

hollows it out.[98]

Literature by providing the medium in which 'interminable reductions' occur to things lets them describe themselves outside the human consciousness. Blanchot continues to argue that the 'interminable reductions' are carried out by the act of interminable questioning which never expects any respond. It reminds us of what I mentioned before: literature, for Blanchot begins with questioning. The 'interminable reductions' made by questioning relates literature to the question of being as Blanchot expresses:

> If literature coincides with nothing for just an instant, it is immediately everything, and this everything begins to exist.[99]

It implies that literature empties everything and let being 'begin to exist.' In this notion of literature, he argues that it questions being and can be the only thing which lets being liberate and open itself.[100] In other words, literature as the question is the rethinking of itself and being as Blanchot writes, 'it [literature] is immediately everything, and this everything begins to exist.'

Now we are aware of the questioning of literature and its primacy as a medium of giving rise to being. Before I continue my argument, let me add some sentences about Kafka and his involvement with literature as writing. Regarding the annihilation of the thing by language that I explained in Blanchot, Kafka has the similar idea that language is unable to represent the thing outside. Language only shows how things are related with one another; it does not present them in themselves:

> Language can be used only very obliquely of things outside the physical world, not even metaphorically, since all it knows to do - according to the nature of the physical world - is to treat of ownership and its relation.[101]

This making the thing absent by language makes Kafka think of language as something which does not let us access the world. The word 'ownership' refers to how the human imposes his conceptualization of things on them without presenting them as they are. It

[98] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 304.
[99] Maurice Blanchot, 'Literature and the Right to Death' in *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 22.
[100] The primacy of language in Blanchot and Derrida is against the linguistic turn in structuralism, since deconstructive thinking protests against the logocenterism of linguistics. See Nicholas Royle, *Jacques Derrida* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 62.
[101] Franz Kafka, *The Zürau Aphorism*, trans. by Michael Hofman (London: Harvil Secker, 2006), p. 58.

means that the concept which the human makes of the thing is not the thing itself. Thus, language is unable to present things. This is why Kafka considers language as nothing; it does nothing:

> Writing's lack of independence of the world, its dependence on the maid who tends the fire, on the cat warming itself by the stove; it is even dependent on the poor human being warming himself by the stove. All these are independent activities ruled by their own laws; only writing is helpless, can not live in itself, is a joke and a despair.[102]

The independence which Kafka wishes in writing means that language should be able present things as they are rather than represent them. For this reason, he always wants to see literature as something independent which is able to position the human in the world or give being to him. He releases himself from the knower/known relationship when he writes; he wants to perish by his pen and let writing give him being;

> Simply to race through the nights with my pen, that's what I want. And to perish by it, or lose my reason, that's what I want too, since it is inevitable and long-anticipated consequence.[103]

Reading Kafka by thinking of Blanchot's view of literature creates for Kafka an 'afterlife.'

Worklessness: The Act of Spacing

In this section, I try to explain first how language by the act of 'spacing' becomes the neutral medium to let the thing appear in itself; second, Blanchot's key term 'worklessness' explains the mode of being of the thing that appears as the 'pre-conceptual singularity.' Regarding the notion of 'spacing,' Blanchot argues how language as the neutral medium performs to let the thing appear in the simultaneous disappearance and appearance like a flash:

[102] Franz Kafka, *The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1914-1923*, ed. by Max Brod, trans. by Martin Greenberg (New York: Schocken, 1949), p. 201.
[103] Franz Kafka, *Letters to Felice*, ed. by Erich Heller and Jurgen Born, trans. by James Stern and Elizabeth Duckworth (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 411.

> The lighting moment flashes from the work, as the leaping brilliance of the work itself - its total presence all at once, 'simultaneous vision.' This moment is the one at which the work, in order to give being to the 'feint' - that 'literature exists' - declares the exclusion of everything, but in this way, excludes itself, so that the moment at which 'every reality dissolves' by the force of the poem is also the moment at which the poem dissolves and, instantly done, is instantly undone.[104]

The moment that the work illuminates should be comprehended as the moment at which the work is rendered impossible. This moment at which the work becomes possible is oscillating between its existence as the making absent of things in the world and their reappearance. This 'pendulum' marks the work as the time of destruction and construction simultaneously. Its construction is at the price of its destruction. Language as the work negates thing in the world and at the same time re-appears as the thing itself. This reminds us of the second slope of literature. Language marks the 'space' between the disappearance of the thing and its re-appearance which is the only possibility by which the thing will comes by itself. Blanchot puts quotation marks over some words - 'simultaneous vision,' literature exists,' 'every reality dissolves,' and 'done, undone' - in the passage above to make known literature's idiosyncratic existence: the 'space' produced by the 'simultaneous' disappearance and re-appearance of the thing becomes the unique characteristic of the power of language that shows the mode of the existence of the thing and literature itself. The narrator in Blanchot's short story, *Awaiting Oblivion*, clearly speaks about this 'space:'

> In each word, not words but the space that, appearing, disappearing, they designate as the moving space of their appearance and their disappearance.[105]

The 'space' implies the distance that language takes from things in order to let them reappear; its 'moving' state, its transience, makes the appearance a 'becoming,' that is to say, it remains a coming. Here, the distance brings things in new and de-familiarized form outside the category of representation. In this sense, literature is not imaginative or fictitious and never makes the thing in the world inaccessible. The metaphor of flare and flash is repeated in the

[104] Maurice Blanchot, 'Mallarmé's Experience' in *The Space of Literature*, p. 45.
[105] Maurice Blanchot, *Awaiting Oblivion*, trans. by John Gregg (Nebraska: The University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 71.

essay 'The Book to Come' when Blanchot explains Mallarmé's notion of the book. It clarifies the mode of the appearance of the thing in language:

> Mallarmé negates the present. But he preserves it for the book where it becomes a presentless assertion in which all that is flares and vanishes simultaneously - the instant at which they flare and fade is an instant blossom of some ethereal transparency.[106]

The act of 'making space' or distance between word and its referent that is performed in language does not bring back the thing in the closed and pre-determined meaning posed by the human.[107] The distance between the word and its referent makes the thing re-appear in the 'presentless vision' which means the thing re-appears as it is. Blanchot calls this re-appearence 'negation without negation' or the 'neither/nor' situation which makes the work possible.[108] This neither/nor situation explains the 'transparency' of the appearance of the thing.

As the result of the distance between the word and the thing in the world, language, for Blanchot, never bears the possibility of signification by which we believe that a sign represents a signified. Levinas explains this point about Blanchot:

> The sign is made from afar, from beyond and in the beyond. Poetic language gives sign without the sign being a bearer of signification through relinquishing signification.[109]

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[106] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Book to Come' in *The Sirens' Song*, trans. by Sacha Rabinovitch (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982), p. 233.

[107] Derrida discusses that a poem of Ponge occupies the very hyphen between signifier-signified. The hyphen functions as the place of betweenness. See Timothy Clark, *Derrida, Heidegger, Blanchot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 160.

[108] We find this notion in different texts by Blanchot expressed in phrases such as 'it describes without describing', 'this death without death', 'survival which is not one of them', in 'Literature and the Right to Death'; 'death without death', 'death but without death', 'the origin of what is without origin', 'air without air', and 'thought without thought', in *Thomas the Obscure*; 'speech without speech', 'resemblance [...] without resemblance', in *The One who Standing Apart from Me*; 'being without being', 'anew without newness', 'place without place', and 'distance without distance', in *The Infinite Conversation*; 'approach without approach', 'waiting and without waiting', 'spaced out without space', and 'respite without respite', in *Awaiting Oblivion*; 'the other, in his attraction without attraction', 'the name without name', 'other unhappiness, of an unhappiness without unhappiness', and 'the end (without end) of books', in *The Step Not Beyond*.

[109] Emmanuel Levinas, *Sur Maurice Blanchot* (Montpellier: Fata Morgana, 1975), p. 39. Quoted in Gary D. Mole, *Levinas, Blanchot, Jabes: Figures of Estrangement* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1997), p. 157.

In the light of Levinas' comment, we can say that Blanchot does not believe in the signified brought by the word; the creation of meaning of the thing is accomplished by itself through the distance it takes from the word. Blanchot writes in this sense:

> Literature says: 'I no longer represent, I am; I do not signify, I present.[110]

This distance becomes the 'in-between' in which the infinite nature of the referent presents itself. It should be noticed that language does not create the possibility of multiple meanings for its referent in its distance from it. According to Derrida who argues about this space in his own term, hymen, language acts:

> through an interruption that suspends the equation between the mark and the meaning, the blank marks everything white.[111]

Language as the hymen works as the suspending space which makes spacing possible; it is perceived that language is not the semantic producer for the thing that is referred to. It only intervenes as the suspension of semantic possibility:

> It is the hermeneutic of *polysemy* that must be replaced by *dissemination*.[112]

For Derrida, hermeneutics (semanticism) results in the ambiguity of multiple meanings. This is expressed as the first level of ambiguity by Blanchot.[113] Dissemination interrupts polysemy and makes a text have undecidable meaning. The undecidability of dissemination does not mean the plurality of meaning but it signifies the suspension of any semantic possibility as signification. For Blanchot, the constant distance between the word and its referent produces another level of ambiguity which he calls 'indifference':

> Sometimes it [language] gives us the power to control things in their absence and through fiction, thus maintaining us in a domain rich with meaning; but sometimes it removes us to where things has no value either significative

[110] Maurice Blanchot, 'Literature and the Right to Death' in *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 47.
[111] Jacques Derrida, 'The Double Session' in *Dissemination*, trans. by Barbara Johnson (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 261.
[112] Jacques Derrida, 'The Double Session' in *Dissemination*, p. 269.
[113] Maurice Blanchot, 'Mallarmé's Experience' in *The Space of Literature*, p. 263.

> or affective, but is the passion of indifference.[114]

In the 'indifferent' or neutral space between the word and its referent, the undecidability is the rich meaning of the thing that reveals itself. To put it in a different way, the 'space' between the word and its referent is where the 'beginning' occurs as the interruption of signification and the thinking of the unthinkable about the referent whose presentation is outside the category of being/non-being:

> We can understand that the work is thus pure beginning, the first and last moment when being presents itself by way of jeopardized freedom which makes us exclude it imperiously, without, however, again including it in the appearance of beings.[115]

An example of the 'space-making' between the word and its referent as 'beginning' can be Blanchot's reading of a phrase 'as vast as night and light' in one of Baudelaire's poems. Blanchot writes that:

> Thus in Baudelaire's work, the word 'vast' becomes a figure on its own, and suffices to carry the entire 'force of speech.' *As vast as night and light.* In this case, where would the image be, if there were one? In the word *vast*, where night spreads to attain its nocturnal dimension, where light destines itself to light by way of the always unilluminated expanse, yet without night and clarity mixing or merging, being never 'vast' enough to measure the birth in this word of the image, which is each time the entire presence of this counter-world that is, perhaps, the imaginary.[116]

The image of 'vastness' in the phrase is made possible by the opposition of darkness and lightness. As Timothy Clark explains, night becomes 'vast' by banishing day, while light, conversely, becomes 'vast' by banishing darkness.[117] Night and day attain their vastness without merging together. They cannot show 'vastness' either without each other or together. According to Blanchot, they never become 'vast' enough to show the vastness of the image of 'vast.' The image becomes unimaginable, since the words night and day cannot determine it.

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[114] Maurice Blanchot, 'Mallarmé's Experience' in *The Space of Literature*, p. 263.
[115] Maurice Blanchot, p. 46.
[116] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 324.
[117] Timothy Clark, *The Poetics of Singularity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), p. 111.

The image begins an interruption in the common meaning of 'vastness' by creating a space between the word and its referent. It reminds us of what I explained as the 'parentheses' which Blanchot uses to show how language brackets any presupposition in order to let its referent itself appear in de-familiarized and singularized presence. Blanchot in this text considers the image as a question, the moment of enigma which reveals the richness of meaning:

> It does not lose its richness, its mystery, or its truth; on the contrary, by its air of question, it calls upon all our inclination to respond by bringing forward the assurances of our culture and the interests of our sensibility. [118]

The image as a question reminds us of what I mentioned earlier that literature for Blanchot begins with question. The image or literature questions the 'assurance' of our being.

Language by creating a distance between the word and the thing produces the space for the thing to make itself appear. In this part of my argument, I will explain the mode of being of the thing in this 'space' via Blanchot's talk of 'desoeuvrement' or 'worklessness' as an 'undoing of being.' Language becomes the space that questions being as the unified and totalized entity. Heidegger in 'The Origin of the Work of Art' uses the phrase 'to make space for' art which means to liberate and to open the being of the being to come into the steadiness of its shining. [119] Heidegger's phrase can clarify Blanchot's notion of literature as 'making space:' literature or art lets itself become possible as the origin of itself and the thing to which it gives being. Blanchot, here, brings language and being together:

> It is a region anterior to the beginning where nothing is made of being, and in which nothing is accomplished. It is the depth of being's inertia [*desoeuvrement*].[120]

The region of 'worklessness' [*desoeuvrement*] or the interruption between the word and its referent is the neutral, neither/nor space before being that never reaches any complete being of the thing. It always remains in potentiality, 'being's inertia.' Its appearance is not the accomplishment of potentiality but it is only potentiality that appears. Ann Smock translates 'desoeuvrement' as 'uneventfulness' in her translation of *The Writing of Disaster*. Pierre Joris translate the word as 'unworking' in his translation of *The Unavowable Community*.

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[118] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 324.
[119] Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art' in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 45.
[120] Maurice Blanchot, 'Mallarmé's Experience' in *The Space of Literature*, p. 46.

According to Joris 'worklessness' in English does not convey the active sense of the French word *'desoeuvrement*.' [121] That is why 'worklessness' does not mean the absence of the work or inoperativeness. Foucault considers madness as the absence of work which implies the absence of reason that excludes madness. He writes that literature is the region where the experience of madness has been enacted. The 'worklessness' [*desoeuvrement*] could be similar to Foucault's notion of the absence of work, since both are outside human subjectivity whose work is reason and language.[122] As Kevin Hart writes this region:

> Art shows, Blanchot thinks, that human being is linked to the neutral Outside, the space of impossibility; it does so not by aesthetic or formal effect but because being is always and already doubled. Because a thing resembles itself, being is riven and perpetuates itself as nothingness in a poem or a sculpture. Being gives rise to the absence of being as well as to its presence.[123]

The 'neutral Outside' is the space of 'worklessness' [*desoeuvrement*] in which being gives itself presence and absence at the same time because it is not mediated by anything to be represented. Hence, it resembles itself. The neutral space opens onto impossibility which is the only possibility to give rise to being in itself. This impossibility is being and nothingness together. In other words, if being and nothingness are together, it is because nothing is supposed to come as a single entity, i.e. being or nothing. It implies that being is in suspension or lingering, remaining alive while dying, in the neutral space of language.

In order to explain further the 'undoing of being' in 'worklessness,' we can think of Derrida's account of 'Vorstellung.' Derrida argues that 'Vorstellung' is the determination of being as presence; being which stands out in front of: 'being the general form of presence as proximity to a viewing.'[124] The ‘proximity’ implies that language gives rise to being not as the complete form which comes to presence. Language in the neutrality gives rise to being and non-being (nothingness) together. It brings the suspension of being; language makes the writer linger, i.e., remain alive while gradually dying, thus living on border lines between life

[121] Blanchot uses 'desoeuvrement' in his short story, *The One Who Was Standing Apart From Me*, and also in 'The Absence of Book' in *The Gaze of Orpheus*, trans. by L. Davis (New York: Station Hill Press, 1981), pp. 145-60. See *The Unavowable Community*, trans. by Pierre Joris (New York: Station Hill Press, 1988).
[122] Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, trans. by Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa, ed. by Jean Khalfa (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 548.
[123] Kevin Hart, *The Dark Gaze* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 67.
[124] Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. by David B. Allison and Newton Garver (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), p. 53.

and death.[125] In this sense, it does not call for presence or absence. Language in Blanchot's sense is more than a medium; it remains in the act of distancing between non-being and being without arriving in any kind of complete form of being. It achieves the status of being in the 'middle' or 'between,' suspense in arriving at being.

Language as the space of 'worklessness' should not be thought as the origin or the ground or as having an originary status. As Tzvetan Todorov and Bruno Braunrot comment,

> it goes without saying, moreover, that this origin and this beginning are not to be viewed in terms of temporal precedence: 'what comes first is not beginning but renewal; as for being, it is precisely the *impossibility* of being for the first time'.[126]

The 'beginning' of literature is impossible because it is only renewal not the birth of something. 'Beginning' does not signify origin because it questions origin itself if the human subjectivity is considered as that which gives being to the self and the world. According to Foucault, Nietzsche's *Toward the Genealogy of Morals* demonstrates that there is no secret, atemporal essence of things lying behind them; their secret is that perhaps they have no essence, or that their essence is constructed piece by piece, out of forms foreign to them:

> The search for descent is not the erecting of foundation: on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified.[127]

The notion of 'beginning' could be explained in terms of Heidegger's view of art. Heidegger argues that art is the place in which the primal conflict of the thing within itself is fixed and by this conflict it comes to exist; art manifests this primal conflict for the first time. In other words, art founds being in the way that it becomes the beginning of things. Heidegger equates the work of art with truth and writes:

> The nature of truth is, in itself, the primal conflict in which that open center

[125] Derrida in his comment on Blanchot's text, 'Death Sentence,' argues how writing is a kind of living on border lines. See Jacques Derrida, 'Living On: Border Line' in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1979).
[126] Tzvetan Todorov and Bruno Braunrot, 'Reflections on Literature in Contemporary France', *New Literary History*, Vol. 10, No. 3, Anniversary Issue: I (Spring, 1979), p. 515.
[127] Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' in *Language, Counter- Memory, Practice*, ed. by Donald F. Bouchard (New York: Cornell University, 1980), p. 147.

> is won within which what is, stands, and from which it sets itself back into itself.[128]

Being is not an essence or origin, but it is the result of the conflict within an entity. Art allows being come out in infinity; every time that being stands out, it is still not complete. Art in Heidegger's view which means the 'primal conflict' is similar to the 'worklessness' which signifies that word becomes the space in which the thing presents its being. The word becomes the space in which the conflict within the thing presents itself and this conflict is nothing but its being.

As the last point of my argument, author and reader come to existence when the work as 'worklessness' [*desoeuvrement*] is written. Both of them become inherent parts of the work. In this sense, Blanchot says:

> To read is not to write a book again, but to allow the book to *be*.[129]

To let the work to be means the formation is not limited to the author and the reader. They are in the space of the work. According to Timothy Clark, the act of reading for Blanchot is:

> the freeing of the work from the merely instrumental or communicative notion of language.[130]

The work is not an instrument of communication between the author and the reader. The work is formed by them before its beginning. The work is not produced first by the author and then is read by the reader. According to what we discussed for the disappearance/appearance situation of the work, since the work is in the neutral space of always beginning, there remains no author or reader. In this sense, Clark explains that the work for Blanchot means 'worklessness' [*desoeuvrement*]:

> Blanchot argues that a work written only to be read can say nothing fundamentally new. Thus, even as the writer is engaged by the work's emergent self-affirmation, its pressing itself forward according to the law of its own emergent properties, he or she must resist both the desire for self-expression and also the hypothetical reader for whom the words may already have another

[128] Martin Heidegger, 'The Origin of the Work of Art' in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, p. 96.
[129] Maurice Blanchot, 'Reading' in *The Space of Literature*, p. 193.
[130] Timothy Clark, *Derrida, Heidegger, Blanchot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 129.

> and alien signification; either could foreclose the work's emergence on its own singular, unprecedented terms.[131]

This comment also places the author, reader, and the work in the same space as the 'worklessness' [*desoeuvrement*] in which the work comes to be as a beginning, on its own singularity. This beginning or singularity implies the infinite nature of the work in the sense that it never arrives in any finalized form and can be repeated every time in a different form. The 'worklessness' [*desoeuvrement*] has this capacity to begin always because it is situated in the middle between disappearance and appearance by the authority of language.[132] According to Donald G. Marshall, the work is the result of writing itself rather than the act of writer:

> The writer becomes a writer insofar as writing becomes its own source through him. A narrative or poetic image emerges not out of an exercise of the writer's will or possibilities, but as what is impossible for the writer's ordinary life. Writing is the source of the writer and itself.[133]

Language in 'worklessness' [*desoeuvrement*] is the moment between the appearance of the word and the disappearance of the referent. In this moment, according to Blanchot, an interruption occurs which never lets any signified appear in a final and complete form. We can conclude that 'worklessness' [*desoeuvrement*] as the 'beginning' makes the text live on, that is to say, to have 'afterlife.'

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[131] Timothy Clark, 'Contradictory Passion: Inspiration in Blanchot's 'The Space of Literature', *SubStance*, Vol. 25, No. 1, Issue 79. (1996), p. 50.

[132] The eternal beginning of the worklessness also signifies a singularity which means the work is unrepeatable because it is singular but can be repeated differently each time. See Timothy Clark, *The Poetics of Singularity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005).

[133] Donald G. Marshal, 'History, Theory, and Influence: Yale Critics as Readers of Maurice Blanchot' in *The Yale Critics: Deconstruction in America*, ed. by Jonathan Arc, Wald Godzich, Wallace Martin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 147. Marshall in this essay criticizes Geoffrey Hartman and Paul de Man because he believes that they focus on the situation of the artist and the self as the source of the work. See Geoffrey Hartman, 'Foray through Existentialism' in *Yale French Studies*, 1956 and Paul de Man, 'Impersonality in Criticism of Maurice Blanchot' in *Blindness and Insight* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971).

Chapter 2

What is Worklessness in Kafka?

Since the publishing of Kafka's works, we have witnessed huge varieties of interpretations in contexts like theology, sociology, psychology, biography, etc. Besides these exegetical readings, there are other readings which argue for a radical undecidability of meaning in Kafka's works. In the exegetical readings, all readings are possible and justifiable; but this has led to the opposite reading that is, the view that sees the work's meaning undecidable. Put it differently, the idea that a single meaning could not be determined as the only meaning. In the first category, the problematic nature of the exegetical readings is because of their symbolic reading of Kafka's texts. These readings believe in the inseparability of symbol from its meaning supposing that any symbol has got a specific meaning. This reminds us of Coleridge who believes that a symbol is what it represents.[134] In the second category, the inseparability of meaning from symbol has invoked linguistic readings of Kafka which deal with the crisis of language in terms of its function of representation.

In this chapter, I read one of Kafka's parables which propose Kafka's view of language as something which gives being.[135] This notion regarding Blanchot's concept of language which I discussed in the last chapter is outside the representational function of language and makes language the space to let things come out infinitely in themselves. In this view, for Kafka, language positions man in the world through the act of 'spacing' or 'distanciation.' I argue that 'spacing' and 'distanciation' are in Kafka's *The Castle*.

A parable is a brief, succinct story, in prose or verse that illustrates a truth. However, Kafka cuts out the truth behind the parable. The creative power of language which Gray explains could be traced in one of Kafka's parable, 'On Parable.' This text shows the tendency toward the notion of language as a free entity with its own law and creative power:

> Many complain that the words of the wise are always merely parables and of use in daily life, which is the only life we have. When the sage says: 'go over,'

[134] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Statement's Manual*, quoted by Paul de Man, 'The Rhetoric of Temporality' in *Interpretation: Theory and Practice*, ed. by Charles Singleton (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969), p. 177. An example of the symbolical reading in this sense is Erich Heller, *Franz Kafka* (New York: Viking, 1974).

[135] It could refer to Heidegger's concept of *es gibt* i. e. being gives itself. This concept rejects the category of subject-object relation in understanding Being. See David Wood, *The Deconstruction of Time* (Illinois: Northwestern University, 2001), p. 253.

he does not mean that we should cross to some actual place, which we could do anyhow if the labor were worth it; he means some fabulous yonder, something unknown to us, something too that he cannot designate more precisely, and therefore cannot help us here in the very last. All these parables really set out to say merely that the incomprehensible is incomprehensible, and we know that already. But the cares we have to struggle with every day: that is a different matter.

Concerning this a man once said: Why such reluctance? If you followed the parables you yourselves would become parables and with that rid of all your daily cares.

Another said: I bet that is also a parable.

The first said: you have won.

The second said: but unfortunately only in parable.

The first said: no, in reality: in parable you have lost. [136]

The key word, 'Gleichnis' is translated into English as 'parable.' In the word's etymology in *OED*, 'para' is a suffix means 'side by side' and 'bole" means 'a throw.' It could be said the word parable means to throw side by side. The word 'Gleichnis' is also 'simile' or a 'poetic or rhetorical figure,' 'a symbol,' and 'a sign with a definite meaning.' But the word parable also is synonymous with 'allegory.' Allegory in Walter Benjamin's view signifies fragmentation.[137] It signifies discarding, rather than unifying two things as happens in symbol. Benjamin writes that in allegory: 'any person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else.'[138] Thus, the word 'Gleichnis' both means simile and allegory, simile as symbol which unifies sign and meaning and allegory which discards sign and its meaning.[139]

Regarding Kafka's view of the representational function of language, this parable could be said to question not only the problematic nature of simile or metaphor but also language itself. This parable shows that language itself acts as an allegory which discards or fragments meaning. We should read Kafka's parable having in mind the meaning of the word

[136] Franz Kafka, *Parables and Paradoxes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), p. 11.
[137] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. by John Osborn (London: verso, 2003), p. 166.
[138] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, p. 175.
[139] For allegorical reading of Kafka in Benjamin's sense, see Walter Sokel, 'Symbol, Allegory, Existential Sign' in *The Myth of Power and the Self*, p. 108.

'Gleichnis' which signifies 'allegory.' In the first part of the parable, there is a distinction between the empirical use of parable in daily life and its opposite as something useless regarding our life. Its impractical use is incomprehensible and remains unknown. In this sense, parable does not bring two similar things together by comparison in order that one of them be known but it works as allegory which does not unify the sign with its signified. The incomprehensibility of parable denotes its meaning both as simile and allegory at the same time. In the second part of the parable, the first speaker invites the many in the first part to follow to become 'Gleichnis' themselves and thus be released from daily cares. This invitation to become language is opposite to the first speaker who invites people to follow sages' behavior in action. The first speaker wants the transformation of human beings into linguistic structure.[140]

The realm of 'Gleichnis' takes the place of empirical life. This reminds us of when Kafka wishes the pen takes his control.[141] People live in incomprehensibility in which language is no longer simile or symbol which denotes unified single meaning or truth. In other words, people should live between simile and allegory; this is a life of middleness provided by language in which new possibilities are opened.[142] Whereas the second speaker believes that the living in parable is not real life, the first speaker confirms it as the only reality. The reality is living in language although you lose living in a practical life. People have to lose their identity in empirical life in order to enter the living in language. There is a movement from the empirical life to linguistic life and then to life again. The result is the reality of a living which situates people in suspense between simile and allegory if we mean them as the unified single truth and its opposite as fragmentation. Language as the neutral space experienced by Kafka creates the human and the world. This creation would be in the form of process and does not occur once and for all. As Gerald L. Bruns explains, writing, for Kafka, demands the experience of this neutral space:

With Kafka the experience is that of an absolute demand, an exigency of

[140] Heidegger in *Being and Time* argues that discourse or language is what constitutes being: 'If discourse, as the articulation of the intelligibility of the 'there', is a primordial *existentiale* of disclosedness, and if disclosedness is primarily constituted by Being-in-the-world, then discourse too must have essentially a kind of Being which is specifically *worldly*. The intelligibility of Being- in-the-world *expresses itself as discourse*.' See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. by John Marquarrie and Edward Robinson (India: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 204.

[141] Franz Kafka, *Letters to Felice*, ed. by Erich Heller and Jurgen Born, trans. by James Stern and Elizabeth Duckworth (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 411.

[142] Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 25.

> writing that leaves no space for anything else. The writer does not exist except within the space of this exigency. This exigency, this necessity of writing, becomes the writer's reality; everything else drains away.[143]

Kafka demands that writing be the only space that gives reality. The existence in this space is given by nobody or nothing.

The Castle and Distanciation

Kafka's *The Castle* exemplifies the neutral space of language and its operation as 'spacing,' a process of 'distanciation' which signifies approaching without reaching your destination. This term explains the action of language or literature which is in complete independency as a neutral space to let everything come to existence or present itself. K. in the text is called for by the castle to survey the lands of the area around the castle. The nature of occupation remains in shadow and all the text is devoted to K.'s futile attempt to be confirmed by the castle. K.'s acceptance by the castle becomes the process which keeps him in a distance from the castle. The whole text deals with K.'s approaching the castle through letters which come from the castle. The proximity of K. to the castle through letters draws attention to the nature of writing and language. It seems that a theme of moving from non-being to being is set up in the text by the decision of the castle to accept K. as a land surveyor. However, the duality of K. and the castle, or outside and inside, is blurred from on early point in the text when it is said that the village belongs to the castle.

The castle is emptied of having significance or a specific meaning for which the castle stands as symbol. It invites us not to think of the symbolic or transcendental reading of the castle. From the beginning when K. arrives in the village, emptiness founds his impression of the village and the castle:

> The village was deep in snow. The castle hill was hidden, veiled in mist and darkness, nor was there even a glimmer of light to show that castle was there. On the wooden bridge leading from the main road to the village K. stood for a long time gazing into illusory emptiness above him.[144]

[143] Gerald L. Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot: The Refusal of Philosophy* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 62.

The theme of unveiling or revelation of something is connected to emptiness by situating K. on a bridge as a middle point; the illusory emptiness is the meaninglessness of the village and the castle. This meaninglessness is their meaning.

The castle's name is pronounced by the young man in the inn which K. enters upon his arrival in the village as:

> the castle of my lord the Count West-west. (9)

The emptiness of the castle is emphasized by this name. The name consists of two words separated by hyphen. The first word is capitalized and the second word is the repetition of the first word with small letter. The proper name is disappropriated. The property given to the castle by means of a proper name which makes it an entity with a meaning is removed and left empty. The proper name (West) and common name (west) come together to show the repetition that is the nature of naming and the thing that is named are unknownable. Derrida discusses the nature of the proper name in a surname or family name. The family name is actually an added name which fills the lack in one's first name by repetition. The additional family name implies a lack in first name for which it is added to complete it. That is why naming is already re-naming.[145] According to Derrida:

> A word which originally signifies only something sensuous […] is carried over into the spiritual sphere […] a purely sensuous content, which then is lost and exchanged for a spiritual meaning, the original sense being sensuous […], the second spiritual[…] but gradually the metaphorical element in the use […] of such a word disappears and by custom […] the word changes from a metaphorical ([…]*non propre*) to a literal expression […], because owing to eadiness to grasp in the image only the meaning, image and meaning are no longer distinguished […].[146]

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[144] Franz Kafka, *The Castle*, trans. by Willa and Edwin Muir (Middlesex: Penguin Books in association with Martin Secker & Warburg, 1975), p. 9. Any reference to Kafka's *The Castle* from now on is given in parenthesis.

[145] Jacques Derrida, *On the Name*, trans. by David Wood, John P. Leavey, JR., and Ian McLeod, ed. by Thomas Dutoit (California: Stanford University Press, 1995). Benjamin also argues that the human naming of things after God called them to being is an overnaming. It signifies the emptiness of the human naming. See Walter Benjamin, 'On Language as Such' in *Selected Writings*, trans. by Rodney Livingston and Others, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, Volume1(Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 73.

[146] Jacques Derrida, 'White Mythology' in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: The

The process of literalization of metaphor, changing from abstract to concrete, makes its second meaning (spiritual meaning) to be the first meaning (sensuous meaning). The result is appropriating the spiritual meaning which makes it seems to be the literal meaning or proper expression. Kafka brings back the first meaning, literal meaning, and distinguishes between the literal and spiritual meaning. In other words, a re-literalization is carried out in order to show that the castle has only a literal meaning or sensuous meaning; the name of the castle, West-west, implies the rejection of its spiritual meaning and it is only a literal expression of a concrete object.[147] Adorno also writes that Kafka's prose cuts out the truth behind it:

> It expresses itself not through expression but by its repudiation, by breaking off. It is a parabolic system the key to which has been stolen.[148]

Similar to Adorno, Blanchot, in one of his early essays, writes of Kafka that his thoughts oscillate perpetually between extreme individuality and generality and never achieve either of them; his thoughts remain in a wavering that put an end to wavering. In Benjamin's words, the true nature of poetry is the expression of particularities without referring to a general which implies the fragmentary nature of thought.[149] In this sense, Kafka's thoughts are fragmentary. Blanchot remarks of Kafka's symbols:

> They are not meaningless since meaninglessness is their meaning.[150]

Symbols and allegories in Kafka's text are meaningless since they are outside representational signification. For Blanchot, this meaninglessness is considered as their meaning. As Benjamin argues, every gesture in Kafka's novels is an event in itself that does not represent but is unforeseeable and unpredictable; it looks towards a future that is to come not predetermined meaning.[151]

University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 225. I have omitted the German words.

[147] Stanley Corngold has discussed the literalization of metaphor in Kafka's *Metamorphosis* which is similar to my argument about the castle. See Stanley Corngold, *Franz Kafka, The Necessity of Form* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 47-90.

[148] Theodor. W Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka' in *Prisms*, trans. by Samuel and Shierry Weber (London: Neville Spearman, 1967), p. 246.

[149] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. by John Osborn (London: verso, 2003), p. 161.

[150] Maurice Blanchot, 'Reading Kafka' in *The Sirens' Song*, trans. by Sacha Rabinovitch (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982), p. 23. This point is also argued by Blanchot in 'The Wooden Bridge.' See Maurice Blanchot, 'The Wooden Bridge' in *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. by Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

[151] Walter Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka, On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death' in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn, p. 117.

The boundary between K. and the castle is blurred when the son of the Castellan in the inn tells K. that 'this village belongs to the Castle' (9). This sentence removes the boundary between the inside (K. as the knower) and the outside (the castle as known). This elimination of any distinction between the village and the castle disappoints K. who intends to approach the castle and have cognitive mastery over it since he is now part of the village not a separate entity. This point is repeated by the teacher of the village who says:

> There is no difference between the peasantry and the Castle. (17)

The castle is brought down from the highest transcendental position to the same level as the village. However, while knowing this fact, K. is still looking for the content of the castle. Blanchot concludes from Olga's claim that every one belongs to the castle that 'there is no Castle.'[152] On the first day after sleeping in the inn when K. sees the castle, he does not find a separate distinct building but a cluster of small buildings similar to the village cottages:

> A mere pile consisting of innumerable small buildings closely placed together and of one or two storeys; if K. had not known that it was a castle he might have taken it for a little town. (15)

Here, it is suggested that there is no castle as unified entity or, rather, there is no measurable land to be known for which K. has been invited by the castle to survey. Charles Bernheimer argues that the castle is a ruin, a fragmented and broken signifier, which emblematizes the allegorical universe as described by Benjamin.[153] In advancing his theory of allegory, Benjamin writes:

> Ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars.[154]

This sentence, in the first place, means that ideas are neither objects' concepts nor their laws. They do not contribute to the knowledge of phenomena. In the second place, constellation is neither concept nor law nor knowledge but the apprehended connections among things without universalizing these connections. K., the village, and the castle are in one space in a 'constellar' relationship in which the reciprocal relationship among its constituents cannot be

[152] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Absence of the Book' in *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. by Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 396.
[153] Charles Bernheimer, *Flaubert and Kafka* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 202. Henry Sussman also analyses the castle in a way that sees K.'s role as the one who negates differences between the castle and the village. See Henry Sussman *Franz Kafka: Geometrician of Metaphor* (Madison: Coda Pres, 1979), pp. 114-19.
[154] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, p. 34.

established. This means that K. cannot move toward the castle in order to know it. They never unify together in the sense that they can know each other. They are always distant from each other, in a fragmentary form. At the same time, K. himself is within this mere constellation. This signifies the blurring of boundaries between inside/outside or the subject/object relationship in terms of the process of knowing from A to B. As Adorno comments on Kafka,

> the boundary between what is human and the world of things become blurred.[155]

Adorno suggests that the border between subjectivity and objectivity is distorted and what remains is not both of them unified together but the situation goes on in a neither/nor status. The reciprocal relationship between K. and the castle transforms into heterogeneous by which the two sides remain apart from each other, that is to say, they remain unknown forever.

In his first visit from the castle and the village, K. passes a church and is impressed by its tower and the attic on the top of the tower of the church:

> It was as if a melancholy-mad tenant who ought to have been kept locked in the topmost chamber of his home had burst through the roof and lifted himself up to the gaze of the world. (16)

The removal of distinction between the inside into the outside is implied by the submitting of the tenant to the world gaze. The tenet delivers himself to the gaze of the world. This implies that the human subjectivity does not impose itself by naming the object but by exposing itself to the gaze of the object. Salvoj Žižek argues this reversal of looking in *The Trial* through discussing what the 'gaze' means:

> First of all they are not on the side of the subject but on the side of the object. The gaze marks the point in the object from which the viewing subject is already *gazed at*: it is the object which is gazing at me.[156]

[155] Theodor. W Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka' in *Prisms*, p. 262.
[156] Salvoj Žižek, *The Žižek Reader*, ed. by Elizabeth Wright and Edmond Wright (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 15.

The subject is not the one who determines the attributes of the object but the object itself reveals itself and is not disposed by the subject. If the inside/outside is blurred, it is a situation in which the subject/object relationship has been replaced by the neutrality of the space which let the object and subject come to existence not in complete form but in the process of becoming since they are in the 'constellar' relationship. This means that one constituent does not determine the attributes of the other one but they are in a unique relationship in every instance. In this situation, they never join together once and for all in a unified form. K., the village, and the castle are in a 'constellar' relation in the sense that they are unknown to one another.

Although Žižek comments on *The Trial,* his argument also relates to *The Castle*. In *The Trial,* when K. goes to find the court room for the first time after his arrest he comes across a woman washing something over a washing-tub in a room and is led by the woman in that room to a door which is opened to the court room. This scene also happens in *The Castle* when K. is pushed into a cottage in the village where he sees a woman is washing something. The court room is not in a separate building distinctive from the city structure but it is located among a bizarre labyrinth. In this sense, the collection of cottages has much the same architecture as the castle. According to Salvoj Žižek, a discontinuity happens between the time K. views the court from outside and the time he enters it:

> The same dissonance and disproportion between inside and outside are reproduced in Kafka's stories, whose sinister architecture - the block of flats where the Court meets in *The Trial* - is characterized by the fact that what appears from outside a modest structure metamorphoses miraculously on entry into an endless maze of halls and stairways.[157]

What K. thinks as reality does not match with what exists in the outside. This rupture between the inside and the outside occurs in K.'s impression in looking at the attic in the tower of the church as if a tenant bursts out delivering himself to the gaze of the world. The discontinuity in Žižek's view can be explained as the blurring of inside/outside which disrupts the process of getting knowledge in which the human (knower) tries to know the world (known). In other words, the discontinuity causes the 'constellar' connection establish

[157] Salvoj Žižek, *The Žižek Reader*, p. 20.

between K. and the outside world which allows everything comes to existence uniquely, always in becoming. This is the neutrality of which Blanchot reminds us in *The Castle* when he argues that,

> *The Castle* holds within itself, as its center, the active and unilluminated relation between what is most 'interior' and the most 'exterior.'[158]

Kafka's text shows a primordial landscape which is neither the village nor the castle; it is a void in which the distinction between inside/outside is disrupted. Therefore, neither interior nor exterior could be thought about. For Michel Foucault, this rupture is called the thought from outside. Foucault, by commenting on Blanchot's texts, writes that the rupture between inside and outside is:

> nothingness beyond all being: thought from outside.[159]

The rupture or the blurring of the inside/outside positions K. and the castle in a state of nothingness that undoes their being. The outside in Foucault's meaning is what always comes out in the rupture between the inside/outside. K. and the castle are situated in the space of the rupture. It is a betweenness in which K. and the castle come to existence. The correspondence between the castle and K. through letter writing establishes this space. This space is language which forms the neutral and sustaining space in the relation between K. and the castle.

Regarding Blanchot's concept of language (as I discussed in the first chapter) as the space which on one hand fails to represent and finds a new power to let things come out infinitely on the other hand, it could be argued that K. and the castle are situated in this space of language. The neutral space of language puts an object outside time and place and lets what has been unthought about the object to be thought. Letter correspondences between K. and the castle draw our attention to this power of language. One of the letters sent by the castle through the messenger, Barnabas, leaves K. to interpret his position in the village. One of K.'s choices in his interpretation of the letter is that his real occupation is determined through the medium of the letter (29). This suggests that the letter or language gives rise to his being apart from the way he interprets the letter. This could be seen when K. comments on the way the superintendent interprets the letter from the castle:

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[158] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Wooden Bridge' in *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 304.
[159] Michel Foucault, 'Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside' in *Foucault, Blanchot*, trans. by Jeffrey Mehlman and Brian Massumi (New York: Zone Books, 1997), p. 16.

> You interpret the letter so well that nothing remains of it but a signature on a blank sheet of paper. (72)

The blank space signifies that it is only the neutral space of language in its new function that gives being to K.; nothing happens but the space of an abyss which let being come out. The signature on a blank paper is signing on the space in which nothing happens but space. The blank space that remains after interpretation signifies the failure of interpretation and any polysemy in reading a text. What remains is the space that let K.'s existence come to be. Every time that a text is read, it is signed; its meaning is its afterlife in every act of reading. It could be considered as making the space for a new signature, the 'distanciation' that never let the text arrive at a final meaning.[160] In other words, the castle is only the letter or language that lets K. comes to existence. The blank paper hints at the endless 'distanciation' in this process of coming to existence. It seems that K. comes to exist if he is accepted by the castle to live in the village. Since K. is accepted to live through letters, it can be said writing positions him in the village. In conversation with the Superintendent, K. concludes that everything here is uncertain and insoluble:

> The very uncertainty about your summons guarantees you the most courteous treatment, only you're too sensitive by all appearances. Nobody keeps you here, but that surely does not mean throwing you out. (75)

K. arrives in a land which has had no existence before and is only given existence by letter writing or actual language. The suspense of this uncertainty and his status between being accepted and thrown out betrays the reality of his situation. His existence is always coming through the 'distanciation' in moving toward the castle; it is not given once and for all. Derrida has the idea of 'spac*ing*' which explains existence in 'distanciation.' For Derrida, there is the space or interval between two things which makes them approach each other without joining. It removes the possibility of a unified entity:

> I specify again that spacing is a concept which also, but not exclusively, carries the meaning of a productive, positive, generative force […] it is not only the interval the space constituted between two things (which is the usual sense of

[160] For the discussion of signature in Derrida, see Timothy Clark, *Derrida, Heidegger, Blanchot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 134.

> spacing), but also spac*ing*, the operation, or in any event, the movement of setting aside. It marks what is set aside from itself, what interrupts every self-identity, every punctual assemblage of the self, every self homogeneity, self interiority.[161]

The 'spac*ing*' is, I suggest, 'distanciation' which interrupts the 'assemblage' of an entity. It opens the possibility of the heterogeneous and dynamic invention in order to create new possibilities. It does not reduce existence to limitations and closure.

Letters from the castle which invite and frustrate exegetical reading empty the castle of any signification; letters become a degree zero point, the space between the word and its referent in Blanchot's concept, which allows the castle to be thought outside of interpretation.[162] K. on his first day in the village walks toward the castle in a street that never reaches the castle not because it is never ending way but because it turns back toward the first point:

> So he resumed his walk, but the way proved long. For the street he was in the main street of the village, did not lead up to the Castle hill, it only made toward it and then, as if deliberately, turned aside, and though it did not lead away from the Castle it got no nearer to it either. (17)

The way toward the castle is only approaching and remains in proximity with the castle; it always remains at a distance. The castle stays always at a distance from K.'s interpretation of the letters from the castle. This is why this scene in the early part of the text is followed by correspondence with the castle through letter writing up to the end. Letter writing or language sustains the castle's existence on one side and K.'s being on the other side which is presented as the struggle to be confirmed by the castle and accepted as a member of the village. On both sides, letters make both K.'s being and the castle itself to come to existence in this 'distanciation' experienced by K. in the street toward the castle.[163]

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[161] Jacques Derrida*, Positions*, trans. by Alan Bass (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 124.
[162] This space between signifier and signified is what Blanchot calls worklessness; this space undoes being. See Maurice Blanchot, 'Mallarmé's Experience' in *The Space of Literature*, p. 46.
[163] J. Hillis Miller argues this 'distanciation' in terms of the metaphysical alienation. K. and the castle are emptied of any transcendental signification. See Joseph Hillis Miller, *The J. Hillis Miller Reader*, ed. by Julian Wolfreys (California: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 185-199.

Foucault writes on images in Blanchot's texts to explain how they are not distinguishable from one another; they are neither one nor the other:

> Blanchot's fictions are, rather than the images themselves, their transformation, displacement, and interstices.[164]

Spaces between images and their transformation signify what always remain outside to be thought - something that has remained unthought. What matters is only the space between them. Images of the castle, village, and Klamm, the highest officer in the castle, whose face could not be distinguished from other people, and the obscurity of the name of Amilia's lover from the castle, Sortini or Sordini, are examples of the importance of spaces between images rather than images individually. K. is uncertain whether his assistants are old assistants whom he has already known or they are new assistants sent by the castle. Their identity hovers between the known and the unknown (24). K. cannot distinguish two assistants from each other other than by their names. It suggests that their names do not signify who they are; it also makes their identity remain in suspense to be thought forever. Benjamin reads this betweenness of assistants as,

> a token of hope which comes to us from that intermediate world in which the assistants are at home.[165]

For Benjamin, the assistants are at home because in the intermediate state they come into existence. Mark M. Anderson in his discussion of Kafka's 'In the Penal Colony' refers to this space between images where the officer of the executive machine is suspended above the burial pit. The image is a state hanging between life and death:

> The officer is left hanging in the machine's jaws without having experienced the promised transfiguration or spiritual illumination.[166]

The space between images has also been discussed by Stephen D. Dowden who comments that the space is the silence which articulates and shows the gap between signs and the truth they are supposed to present:

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[164] Michel Foucault, 'Maurice Blanchot: The Thought from Outside' in *Foucault, Blanchot*, p. 23.
[165] Walter Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka, On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death' in *Illuminations*, p. 114.
[166] Mark M. Anderson, *Kafka's Clothes: Ornament and Aestheticism in the Hubsburg Fin de Siècle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 174.

> The truth of the matter is not to be sought in the representations themselves but instead in the silence that enfolds them.[167]

Kafka's texts provide this silence or space between images to let the unthought to be thought, that is, being comes out infinitely. The space between images rather than images themselves implies the rejection of the signifier/signified relationship for an image and emphasis on the space itself between them. This space is the distance between the image and its meaning by which the image remains always unknown and rich in meaning anew. Images, in this situation, may seem ambiguous but this ambiguity makes their existence appear always in an endless process.

If Blanchot argues that the space of language is neutral, it is because the space is free of the human subjectivity and the history he has made of himself and the world. Kafka's new images provide this neutral space to let them come to existence. Adorno's comment on Kafka's images explains this neutral space:

> His scenery is always obsolete; the 'long, low building' that functions as a school is said to combine 'remarkably a look of great age with a provisional appearance.'[168]

Here, it is suggested that this condition is neither static nor progressive. In this sense, to believe in progression will be neither progressive nor static at the same time. It could be said that there is always something that remains to be thought. Perhaps Deleuz's notion of mapping helps us to argue the neutral space of language in Kafka. Deleuze explains his notion of mapping in contrast with tracing to argue how writing is outside of the signifying system. The tracing has to do with finding an origin, tracing the concept behind a sign or the past of a present. This tracing is similar to the system of signification in language:

> An endless tracing of established concepts and words, a tracing of the world present, past, and future.[169]

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[167] Stephen D. Dowden, *Sympathy for the Abyss* ((Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1986), p. 115.
[168] Theodor. W Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka' in *Prisms*, p. 257.
[169] Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 24.

In contrast, mapping does not deal with the specific separated territory behind which some concept appears. The mapping:

> fosters connection between fields, the removal of blockage […] the map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification […] it always has multiple entryways.[170]

K.'s occupation as land surveyor answers well Deleuze's notion of 'betweenness' of mapping which removes measurement and specifying occurs in tracing significance behind something. K. is unable to measure fields, since the tracing system does not work. Deleuze discusses that writing works the same as surveying and mapping which are outside the signifying system:

> Writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come.[171]

Here, I suggest that K.'s existence is what writing makes of him, writing is the space which maps openness, entryways, and outside. K.'s existence is to come by writing which is exemplified in his occupation as a land surveyor.

The situation of K. whose being is to come is similar to Blanchot *The Last Man*. The patient in a sanatorium who is called 'last man' in the text is considered as 'the other' stripped of specificity, subject to no predicate, bearer of no attribute. The point is that other patients in the sanatorium open themselves to one another and assume the place of the 'last man:'

> In truth, nothing distinguished him from the others.[172]

In *The Castle*, K. is his own other, an other which takes his own place. His own other is coming when he loses himself to writing. K. in approaching the castle via letter writing loses his subjectivity since everything around him loses its identity; the village and its people, the castle and its officers, and K.'s assistants all become images between images. *The Castle* becomes the process of passing from 'I' to *il*, to the neutralization of all identities.[173] It could

[170] Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 12.
[171] Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, pp. 4-5.
[172] Maurice Blanchot *The Last Man*, trans. by Lydia Davis (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 1.
[173] Wall, Thomas Carl, *Radical Passivity: Levinas, Blanchot, and Agamben* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 117.

remind us of Levinas's *il y a* that signifies a subject without predicate.[174] In this sense, Blanchot's other novel, *Aminadab*[175], is also apparently the conventional story of a hero in quest. Thomas, the protagonist, arrives in an unidentified village, like K. in *The Castle* and, upon seeing a woman in a boardinghouse, he decides to enter the building and look for her. The novel follows him though the strange circular path, like K. in approaching the castle, of his search and his effort to reach the upper part of the building. The name Aminadab refers to a myth of a gate keeper whose role is to guard the gate leading below the house to the basement.[176] Thomas is hovering between basement and the upper part of the house. Much like K. who enters the village as the neutral space of language, Thomas enters the house. Thomas is split between the upper part of the house and the basement. The distance that always remains between K. and the castle is the same as Thomas between the basement and the upper part of the house that is opened by language. Literary space opens K. and Thomas to their other - the other as unknown which Blanchot believes the pure novel is in search of; language allows this unknown to come:

> It [the pure novel] is in search of the unknown. It demands the inaccessible.[177]

Kafka in *The Castle* illustrates an obscure region that sketches out the transformation of everything into anonymous and impersonal being. This place is absolute because it does not refer to any place in the world. As Wall writes, it absolves itself from the real, and is an absence of inside and outside.[178] The impersonal being in this not-real region is the inaccessible unknown, the 'other.' 'The pure novel' or writing prompts the thought of the 'outside,' the 'other.'[179] The 'other' that could not be known as Levinas considers enigmatic. The other is not a phenomenon but an enigma, something ultimately refractory to intentionality, opaque to the understanding, and that cannot be reduced to comprehension.[180]

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[174]In *Existence and Existents* and *Time and the Other*, Levinas describes the advent of the subject out of the impersonal neutrality of what he calls the *il y a*, as the anonymous rumbling of existence, the sheer 'there is.' See Emmanuel Levinas *Time and the Other*, trans. by Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), and *Existence and Existents*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1978).
[175] Maurice Blanchot, *Aminadab*, trans. by Jeff Fort (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2002).
[176] Hill, Leslie, *Blanchot, Extreme Contemporary* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 66-7.
[177] Maurce Blanchot, 'The Pure Novel' in *The Blanchot Reader*, ed. by Michael Holland (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 42.
[178] Thomas Carl Wall, *Radical Passivity: Levinas, Blanchot, and Agamben*, p. 116.
[179] Paul Davis, 'A Fine Risk: Reading Blanchot Reading Levinas' in *Re-reading Levinas*, ed. by Robert Bernasconi, and Simon Critchley (London: The Athlone Press, 1991), p. 209.
[180] Emmanuel Levinas, *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*, ed. by Adriaan Theodoor Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 70.

Kafka blurs the inside/outside boundary between the castle and the village; they lose their individuation. The community is exposed to the rupture and distanciation. The castle is not authorized as the state and head; it is indistinguishable from the village. People are not individuals but subjectivities that fuse together under the power of the castle as the head. Kafka by involving the novel with the letter writing decomposes the community consisting of hierarchical social levels. Writing devalues the castle and the law as the head and the sovereign that closes the community to any exterior. K. as a stranger arrives in the village and tries to be accepted by the people and the castle. Kafka rethinks the community as a totality and the fusion of individuals. He opens the limited concepts of the castle and individuals to the outside. He tries to make the relation with the unknown, 'the other.' This, according to Levinas, is the ethics of the other.[181]

[181] Simon Critchley, 'introduction' in *The Cambridge Companion to Lévinas,* ed. by Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 12. The first time that Levinas employs the word ‘ethics’ in the text proper - excluding the preface - of *Totality and Infinity*, he defines it as 'the putting into question of my spontaneity by the presence of the Other (*Autrui*).' See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. by Alphons Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 43.

Chapter 3

The Act of Writing

Part I: The Disappearance of Self

> *I do not have literary interests; rather I am made out of literature, I am nothing and cannot be anything else.*[182] Franz Kafka

Franz Kafka has devoted himself to writing and literature as he writes in one of the entries in his diaries. I shall argue that in the act of writing, Kafka stands before his selfhood and observes that it disappears. Actually, Kafka questions the sense of selfhood through the act of writing. In my first chapter in explaining the notion of literature in Blanchot, I argued that literature or writing gives being in the sense that it becomes the neutral medium through which things come to existence as they are. The existence of the thing should be presented before its destruction by words which make it absent. Words must become the 'space' so that the thing can present itself. In this 'space,' Blanchot writes, when the writer describes something,

> it is the thing itself that describes itself.[183]

The state in which the thing describes itself would be a pre-conceptual singularity. It implies that the thing is situated in the parentheses which keep it at a 'distance' from being represented by words and presents itself infinitely. In the second chapter, I argued how this idea of literature illuminates Kafka's text or vice versa. The other aspect of Blanchot's notion of literature relates to the writer's role as the mediator through which literature or art presents itself. Through the art's presentation, the writer loses his identity and the possibility of configuring the selfhood which he supposes to be the origin of literature. At the same time, literature acts upon the writer's self and puts it in the process of becoming. In this chapter, I will illustrate the disappearance of selfhood in Kafka by the act of writing while thinking of Blanchot. In the next chapter, chapter four, I will continue this illustration by developing the idea which I have called 'the process of dying' of self in Blanchot. It can be argued that Kafka writes in order to integrate the self. First, he starts from self-reflection, a process of showing self which leads to self-denial. Then, the sense of selfhood as the

[182] Franz Kafka, *Letters to Felice*, ed. by Erich Hellex and Jurgen Born, trans. by James Stern and Elizabeth Duckworth (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 428.
[183] Maurice Blanchot, 'Literature and the Right to Death' in *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 52.

outcome of this process remains in a non-dialectical process of appearance and disappearance forever. In other words, any sense of selfhood disappears and lives in the state of 'becoming.'

Here, I bring Blanchot's idea of selfhood in the act of writing in order to read it in Kafka. Blanchot argues that humans make concepts of the things in the outside world and use language to represent those concepts; these concepts, then, become his knowledge of the world and of himself:

> If in knowledge there is appropriation of an object by a subject and of the other by the same, and thus finally a reduction of the unknown to the already known, there is in rapture of fright something worse; for it is the self that is lost and the same that is altered, shamefully transformed into something other than myself.[184]

The human subject reduces the object, the thing in the outside world, to the known. Rather than perceiving the thing in itself which means it always remains unknown, he appropriates it according to what he thinks of it, limits it to the concept he makes of it. The abstraction of the object made by the subject is the absorption of the unknown into the 'already known.' This process makes humans believe that they have knowledge of the world and the sense of selfhood. But Blanchot claims in the second part of this quotation that the human's self through this use of language is lost and in losing itself it enters the 'other,' within itself. To understand the loss of selfhood and the entering of the 'other,' we should refer to what Blanchot considers as 'writing.' In 'writing,' language is no longer the instrument of the human to represent the concepts he made for things but it reveals that those concepts which the human uses to possess them are not things in themselves. Hence, for Blanchot, the self has not known things and is separated from the world by a distance:

> In the world things are *transformed* into objects in order to be grasped, utilized, made more certain in the distinct rigor of their limits and the affirmation of a homogeneous and visible space. But in imaginary space things are *transformed* into that which cannot be grasped. Out of use, beyond wear, they are not in our possession but are the movement of dispossession which releases us both from them and from ourselves.[185]

[184] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 51.

Through 'writing' or the 'imaginary space,' the subject sees that the object has become an abstraction, nothing but the subject's own reflection. As a result, he lives without having access to the world. As Ulrich Hasse explains,

> here it is no longer the powerful subject that gives meaning to its world, but a passive human being that listen to the anonymous voice of the other.[186]

'Writing' as the 'imaginary space' reveals the emptiness of the subject or self which is expressed by Blanchot as 'passivity,' the self that is dispossessed of itself. However, it allows the self to see its own unknown nature. Therefore, as Gasché comments on Blanchot,

> the work that represents myself becomes 'other', that is, myself becomes unpredictable to myself, turns the author of the work into an Other as well into someone strange, foreign to himself.[187]

Writing becomes the space that lets the unknown, the 'other' comes forth. The empty passive self is acted upon by 'writing' and is prepared for coming of the 'other.'

According to Blanchot, art, in a new search, seeks its own autonomous self-presence which is illustrated as something no longer subordinated to values of any kind that are imposed by the human. Art is the creation of its own act without the artist who believes in his power of pure selfhood:

> Creativity does not become the divine attribute par excellence until the dawn of the accelerated period of history, when man becomes pure selfhood […] the artist who calls himself creator does not receive the heritage of the sacred, but only introduces into this heritage the preeminent principle of its subordination. [188]

This statement implies that the artist should be aware of the illusory nature of any selfhood that could create art. Through a backward leap to the beginning of history, perhaps a point in pre-history, the artist in his emptiness becomes a mediator for art to reveal itself. Art is in the

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[185] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Work and Death's Space' in *The Space of Literature*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 141.
[186] Ullrich M. Hasse, and William Large, *Maurice Blanchot* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 132.
[187] Rodolphe Gasche, 'The Felicities of Paradox: Blanchot on the Null-space of Literature' in *Maurice Blanchot: The Demand of Writing*, ed. by Carolyn Bailey Gill (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 48.
[188] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Future and the Question of Art' in *The Space of Literature*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 219.

beginning of a new era that creates itself through its own divinity in the absence of gods. The work is no longer the voice of gods; it is itself a greater beginning:

> Each time that the work communicates, it is as if to announce a greater beginning.[189]

Art at the dawn of another time calls upon the Outside, the 'other,' in a time when we no longer believe in gods:

> In the work man speaks, but the work gives voice in the man to what does not speak: to the unnamable, the inhuman.[190]

As Kevin Hart writes, Blanchot calls the Outside the sacred.[191] Art acts upon itself and unveils the emptiness of what the artist considers as selfhood which is assumed to be able to create the work. In this sense, the artist becomes 'inhuman.' Hart explains that one becomes a poet not by falling in love with oneself and giving way to unbridled subjectivity but by sacrificing self and reconstituting it in the idiom of the poem that is written. Then, the poem:

> is indeed the condition of possibility for life and all writing about life.[192]

Having in mind Blanchot's argument of art and the artist, Kafka's *Diaries* and his letters to his fiancée can be examined concerning the analysis of the act of writing. For Blanchot, the *Diaries* start with the hope of writing to form a sense of selfhood but it ends in despair.[193] He thinks of different stages in Kafka's life: from the young Kafka and his conflict with worldly life, his salvation through literature, and the change in his perspective of literature. Blanchot interprets Kafka's *Diaries* as having a common theme: that Kafka stands before himself to acquire self-knowledge but leads to the loss of the self.[194] Stanley Corngold picks up one of

[189] Maurice Blanchot, 'Characteristics of the Work of Art' in *The Space of Literature*, p. 232.
[190] Maurice Blanchot, p. 232.
[191] Kevin Hart, *The Dark Gaze* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 103.
[192] Kevin Hart, p. 100.
[193] Maurice Blanchot, 'Kafka and the Work's Demand' in *The Space of Literature*, p. 57. Hillis Miller in his essay on Kafka discusses the despair which Kafka experiences in expecting salvation by literature. See J. Hillis Miller, 'Franz Kafka and the Metaphysics of Alienation' in *The J. Hillis Miller Reader*, ed. by Hillis Miller and Julian Wolfreys (California: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 185-199.
[194] This also can recall Jacques Derrida's essay about Kafka's *Before the Law* in which he connects the origin of law to Freud's concept of repression in order to imply that Kafka stands before self. Derrida in some pages in this essay, named 'Before the Law', points to the concept of repression in Freud who invented this concept to say that 'there are no indications of reality in the unconsciousness, so that one cannot distinguish between truth and fiction that has been cathected with affect.' Repression makes us turn away from memory and this furnishes us with 'the intellectual process of development, such as morality, shame, and the like.' It implies that the basis of the self is founded on repression. Derrida considers this and argues that morality is considered to be the law with

the early entries of the *Diaries* which begins '"You," I said' and consists mainly of a long dialogue between speakers called 'I' and 'he' (who is later named 'this bachelor').[195] The theme of this dialogue is interpreted as the identification of an 'I' who is going to acquire selfhood which is formed by writing and of a 'bachelor' as an unknown factor, a negative hidden possibility of the 'I,' which prevent him from constructing selfhood. This entry in the *Diaries* illustrates this point:

> It is easy to recognize a concentration in me of all my forces on writing. When it became clear in my organism that writing was the most productive direction for my being to take, everything rushed in that direction and left empty all those abilities which were directed toward the joys of sex, eating, drinking, philosophical reflection and above all music. I atrophied in all these directions. This was necessary because the totality of my strengths was so light that only collectively could they even halfway serve the purpose of my writing.[196]

Kafka rejects his worldly life to exchange it for writing. The exchange creates a gap in the self - between the writing part and the worldly life. The writing part is going to read the self and confirm its unity and single identity. But, as Corngold introduces, the 'bachelor' is an anti-self within the writing part:

> Since the 'I' aims to liberate writing by overcoming the resistance of its anti-self, it follows that the basic sense of the bachelor must be that mode of the self which hinders (genuine) writing, whose being is resistance to articulation.[197]

The 'articulation' of self or the integration of self by writing is resisted by the 'bachelor.' Corngold explains some images in Kafka's entry to confirm his analysis that the 'bachelor' exists as an anti-self, the non-writer, who hinders the 'I' from constructing selfhood. One of the images in Kafka's entry that Corngold mentions is the city as the habitat of the 'bachelor' and 'I' that has lived in this city for five months. What emerges from this image is that the

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a higher position. Therefore, when man stands before the law, it actually has no origin. See Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Atrridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 192-93.

[195] Franz Kafka, *The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1910-1913*, vol. I, ed. by Max Brod, trans. by Joseph Kresh (New York: Schocken, 1949), p. 23.

[196] Franz Kafka, *The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1910-1913*, vol. I, p. 211.

[197] Stanley Corngold, *Franz Kafka, The Necessity of Form* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 17.

'bachelor' is not the immediate portrait of Kafka's social personality, the alleged futile outcast from the joys of family, whom the 'I' leaves behind. Instead, it resists the formation of the selfhood and brings the writing part into non-being; as Corngold writes,

> [It] gives birth to a new mode of being and a new mode of non-being, its own intrusive negation.[198]

The act of writing which Corngold expresses as 'literature' is the experience of non-being. Kafka by living in separation from the worldly life formed the writing part which was supposed to produce selfhood in writing, but living in writing becomes living in the state of non-being. Kafka writes of this literary existence in his *Diaries*:

> The way one suddenly notices an ulcer on one's body that until this moment was the least thing on one's body- yes not even the least, for it appeared not yet to exist and in more than everything else that we had bodily owned since our birth.[199]

Kafka's self who has attempted to be stable by moving toward writing has now lived in hollowness, a state of nullity as Kafka states in the metaphor of 'ground:'

> He has as much ground as his two feet take up, only as much of a hold as his two hands encompass, so much the less, therefore, than the trapeze artist in a variety slow, who has a safety net hung up for him below. (*Diaries I* 26-27)

For Kafka, this is a new condition and a strange one in which writing conditions him as if he is 'made of stone', as if he is his 'own tombstone (*Diaries I* 33). His being is nothing, as he writes in a paradoxical sentence:

> The trouble is I am not at peace with myself; I am not always 'something', and if for once I am 'something', I pay for it by 'being nothing' for months on end. (*Letters to Felice* 326)

Writing begins when Kafka becomes nothing, lives in the void. This reminds us of Blanchot who writes that literature is null.[200]

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[198] Stanley Corngold, *Franz Kafka, The Necessity of Form*, p. 19.
[199] Franz Kafka, *The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1910-1913*, vol. I, p. 26.
[200] Maurice Blanchot, 'Literature and the Right to Death' in *The Gaze of Orpheus*, p. 22.

Kafka writes in one of his entries that he has been invited to a place 'up there' and he is 'going up' which implies the site of writing far from worldly life (*Diaries I* 29). Kafka uses the metaphor of keeping feet on the earth to show living in writing:

> For only running away could have kept him on the tips of his toes and only the tips of his toes could have kept him on the earth. (*Diaries I* 26)

Kafka runs away from the worldly life to live in writing 'up there.' This running away was actually supposed to keep his feet on the earth which signifies that he expected to live in writing. In Kafka's view, the worldly life for a writer is the freezing land of death where no one should lie down:

> Instead of that [going in the direction of writing] he lay down, as children now and then lie down in the snow in winter in order to freeze to death. He and these children know that they should not have done it at any cost. (*Diaries I* 26)

But if one transfer to the site of writing, he will not find a happy experience either:

> [The writer] is continually starved, he has only the moment, the everlasting moment of torment which is followed by no glimpse of a moment of recovery. (*Diaries I* 26)

Writing makes him aware that his knowledge of the world is illusory; therefore the world in his eyes becomes the land of death. Writing reveals that he has not known the world in itself. It also reveals the emptiness of the self. This is why writing is an unhappy experience.

The reason for the state of non-being in literary existence, according to Blanchot who comments on Kafka's living in writing, is that the more Kafka wants to be sure of his selfhood and to experience the world in writing, the more he loses himself and the world. This can be explained by what Blanchot argues about the relation between writing and the self - namely, that the break from the empirical world by writing reveals the emptiness of selfhood and the distance from the world:

> The break required by writing is a break with thought when thought gives itself

> as an immediate proximity; it is also a break with all *empirical* experience of the world.[201]

The 'thought' which supposes to give the 'immediate proximity' of the world implies the possibility of direct experience of the world. Writing necessitates the break to reveal the illusion of this proximity. This condition calls to mind what Paul de Man believes about literature when he writes about Merleau-Ponty's idea of perception. De Man claims that:

> Literature does not fulfill a plenitude but originates in the void that separates intent from reality. The imagination takes its flight only after the void, the inauthenticity of the existential project, has been revealed; literature begins where the existential demystification ends.[202]

Literature is not a means to experience an empirical self in the world. Rather, it reveals the uncertainty of knowledge the human has about the world. The self in imagination and inwardness only posits distance between itself and reality. In this condition, the self is never shaped because the underworld is void and writing is death; both are nothing.

Elias Canetti writes that it was in Max Brod's family apartment, on 13 August 1912, late in the evening, that Kafka first met Felice Bauer.[203] From this time up to 1917, Kafka writes many letters. The letters which Kafka writes to Felice are evidence of Kafka's attempt at self-constitution. Kafka writes to Felice:

> Not writing makes my head aches, makes me unsure of you and of myself. There is developing within me, the growing habit that makes it a duty for me to write to you. (*Letters to Felice* 229)

This suggests that what makes it an obligation to write is Kafka's developing of a sense of selfhood. Felice for Kafka is an object which makes him conceptualize himself through writing to her, a self-constitution:

> But write to you I must, and the last words written before going to sleep must be written to you, to make everything at the last moment, awaken or asleep,

[201] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 261.
[202] Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd Ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), pp. 34-35.
[203] Elias Canetti, 'Kafka's Other Trial', trans. by Cristopher Middleton, in Franz Kafka, *Letters to Felice*, ed. by Erich Hellex and Jurgen Born, trans. by James Stern and Elizabeth Duckworth (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 8.

> take on a true meaning, such as it never could through my writing. (*Letters to Felice* 214)

Kafka seems to expect to achieve a certainty in his inner life in relation with Felice through the act of writing. This expectation can be seen because Kafka gets engaged to Felice. The 'true meaning' implies a self-constitution that is expected to be accomplished in this relationship. Elias Canetti is right when he writes that Kafka wants himself to be the center, not Felice.[204]

Felice apparently makes Kafka have the feeling of love and peace but he cannot conceptualize these feelings. What is resulted from this relation is torment and it continues forever:

> You are my own self, which I do torment from time to time […] but you are my innermost, my most delicate self which, more than any time, I should like to protect and preserve in perfect peace. Yet despite the best of intentions - it must be my pen going its own wicked ways in my hand. (*Letters to Felice* 194)[205]

This passage suggests that Kafka's pen in the act of writing is independent in the sense that it prevents Kafka from transforming the feeling of love into the concept of love. This love of Felice is actually Kafka's self-love. By this concept-making, Kafka wants Felice to be the same as his own self which implies he wants to constitute a sense of selfhood for himself. Every time that Kafka writes to Felice he invents a new concept of love or self-love which remains uncertain up to the next letter:

> The cause of trouble lies not in the distance, on the contrary, it is this very distance that gives me at least the semblance of having some right to you, and I am holding to that, in so far as one can hold to uncertainties with uncertain hands. (*Letters to Felice* 332)

[204] Elias Canneti, 'Kafka's Other Trial', p. 59. This could be the mirror stage in Lacan. By viewing himself in the mirror, the subject at the Mirror stage begins his entrance into culture and language by establishing his own subjectivity through the fantasy image in the mirror, an image that the subject can aspire towards throughout his life, a stable coherent version of the self. See Jacques Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience' in *Ecrits*, trans. by Bruce Fink (New York: Northon, 2007), pp.75-82.
[205] Kafka writes to Felice that he wants to perish by his pen. See *Letters to Felice*, p. 411.

Writing reveals a 'distance' which signifies the discrepancy between Felice as the object of love and Kafka's self-love. Felice never becomes part of his self. That is why Kafka never arrives at the concept of love or self-love:

> I cannot live without her, nor with her. (*Letters to Felice* 371)[206]

If he comes close to Felice, he will be 'something' and pay for it by being 'nothing'. So he has to keep this 'distance' with the hope of arriving at self-love or selfhood. But, writing brings 'distance' between Kafka and his sense of selfhood, the 'distance' within self; the state of neither to be 'something' nor to be 'nothing' is the mark of self between being and non-being (*Letters to Felice* 326). Carol Jacobs argues that Paul de Man's argument concerning the relation between writing and selfhood clarifies the 'distance' as 'a suspension between self and other.'[207] De Man argues the self/other in *Aesthetic Ideology*. He writes that the subject's development of its subjectivity depends on some perception of thing outside which means it is nothing before its encounter with the world. The subject finds that its perception of the thing is similar to and different from itself in a specular reflection. The attribution of being to the subject depends on the assertion of similarity of the perception to itself, but the perception is not originated from the subject and it is not also in the thing. Thus, the subject remains as nothing as it was and never constitute any sense of selfhood. For de Man, this process of self-constitution is performed by language. Language is supposed to function as an instrument to constitute selfhood but it reveals the impossibility of self-constitution. According to Frank Lentricchia who describes de Man's view of language, by the separation of the self from the natural being which is caused by language, the self splits within itself and becomes a 'self that is at a distance from itself.'[208] The 'natural being' which signifies the outside world is never known by the human in order that he could constitute a sense of selfhood through his knowledge of it. Mizumura describes the condition of the split within the self made by language under de Man's term as 'intersubjective:'

> The term 'intersubjective' points to a state of a perennial temptation because it designates a structure in which the disjunctive relationship of a reflecting self

[206] Kafka has stood in this situation with Felice which the act of writing has brought for him. Blanchot writes about this place: 'At the border of writing, always having to live without you.' See Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, trans. by Lycette Nelson (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 7.
[207] Carol Jacobs, 'Allegories of Reading, Paul de Man' in *Reading de Man Reading*, ed. by Lindsay Waters & Wald Godzich (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 106. See Paul de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 45.
[208] Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1983), p. 293.

> toward itself is being superseded by a 'nondisjunctive' relationship between two selves that are, in principle, identical. In renouncing the temptation to fall into an 'intersubjective' relationship, then, the self constituted by and in language simultaneously attains a knowledge which is the knowledge of the radical discontinuity between two selves, the 'gap that cleaves Being.'[209]

It is actually a perpetual 'distance' between being and non-being, living in a void, a space of writing. Jacobs considers this space as 'a repetition of a pattern that ruptures dialectical progress.'[210] In this sense, it can be claimed that Felice has become an image which does not represent what Kafka gives to her in his writing letters. Kafka's self is exposed to a non-dialectical structure which never grows toward the completion.[211]

Blanchot comments on Kafka's *The Castle* which reflects Kafka's personal experience in his fiction. Blanchot discusses that the Castle for Kafka is the symbol of a superior world and Kafka is impatient to reach it:

> This demand for a premature denouement is the principle of figuration: it engenders the *image*.[212]

According to Blanchot, this image is the image of unity that Kafka represents to himself, but this representation leads to dispersion. The image does not represent the represented. Kafka's attempt to unify with the Castle signifies the single identity which he never holds.[213] In other words, the gap denotes the unattainability that dominates the self. This implies the non-closure and disintegration of the self because Kafka sustains a 'distance' with the Castle in attributing meaning to it; the meaning does not accord with it. The inaccessibility of the Castle suggests de Man's process of figuration and metaphoricity which defines it:

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[209] Minae Mizumura, 'Renunciation' in *The Lesson of Paul de Man*, Yale French Studies, No. 69, (1985), p. 87.
[210] Carol Jacobs, 'Allegories of Reading, Paul de Man' in *Reading de Man Reading*, ed. by Lindsay Waters & Wald Godzich, p. 106.
[211] In his reading of the example of primitive man that Rousseau offers in the third section of the *Essay of the Origin of Language*, Paul de Man argues that when the human wants to understand a thing outside himself there happens a discrepancy between his inner feeling and that thing, or the uncertainty of the inner feeling in relation with the things outside. The result is the failure of self-constitution because the inside feeling does not match with the outside.
[212] Maurice Blanchot, 'Kafka and the Work's Demand' in *The Space of Literature*, p. 79.
[213] Blanchot believes that the reason for this fault is impatience and quotes from Kafka's text. Kafka writes: 'There are two cardinal human vices, from which all the others derive their being: impatience and carelessness. Impatience got people evicted from Paradice; carelessness kept them from making their way back. Or perhaps there is only one cardinal vice: impatience. Impatience got people evicted, and impatience kept them from making their way back.' Franz Kafka, *The Zurau Aphorism*, trans. by Michael Hofman (London: Harvil Secker, 2006), p. 5.

> For early de Man, what has to be renounced is the dream of a language that would reconcile mind and nature, subject and object in the moment of a perfect, self-present access to truth […] the cognitive function resides in the language and not in the subject.[214]

In other words, the permanent 'distance' of the image from what it represents denotes the discrepancy between Kafka's inner feeling of the Castle and the Castle itself in the outside. Blanchot, therefore, argues that:

> the village people represent the most miserable stage between existence and non-existence.[215]

K. and the people in the village never arrive at a certainty about their feeling about the Castle. The uncertainty produces the 'distance' between the inside and the outside; the 'distance' reflects the suspense of selfhood which Blanchot calls the state between being and non-being.

Although Kafka is emptied of the sense of selfhood, he is released from the illusory knowledge of the world and himself. He has arrived at a neutral point in which no demand of worldly living is felt. Blanchot expresses this condition as the zero point in which each person tries to disentangle himself from the world and destroy it in order to reconstruct it as pure of any previous use, to leave it empty.[216] Kafka writes about this condition:

> There is no loophole for doubt or for faith, for love or repugnance, for courage or anxiety, in particular or general, only a vague hope lives on, but no better than the inscription on tombstones. (*Diaries I* 33)

Although Kafka explicitly states that he has no anxiety, his condition implies a different kind of anxiety for a writer who has put himself beyond 'being-in-the-world' by questioning his own self. Corngold also associates the state of living in literature for Kafka with anxiety:

> Accompanying a movement so deeply turned away from life is the anxiety

[214] Christopher Norris, *Paul de Man: Deconstruction and the Critique of Aesthetic Ideology* (New York: Roultledge, 1988), pp. xv-xvi.
[215] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Language of Fiction' in *The Work of Fire*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 82.
[216] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Pursuit of the Zero Point' in *The Blanchot Reader,* ed. by Michael Holland (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 147.

> that can be experienced as the pure signature of literature.[217]

This is the backward movement. For Blanchot, this is a leap back to the point in prehistory when art emerges. Timothy Clark, in his explanation of Blanchot's theory of inspiration, writes about this kind of anxiety as a question of being beyond 'being-in-the-world:'

> Anxiety is a mood in which whomever it possesses is anxious not about any particular item or aspect of life, but about the totality of existence as the question of its own contingency, and about death as the possibility of the impossibility of existing. Anxiety is thus less an expression of individual subjectivity than, as the (self)questioning of its very essence, its syncope, paralysis. At its extreme this total question pitches *Dasein* beyond any sense of history, culture or environment or anything that still serves to define *Dasein* as being-in-the-world.[218]

This suggests that the Heideggerian idea of *Dasein* as 'being-in-the-world' no longer exists for a writer. The writer is beyond being-in-the-world the same as Blanchot's idea that the artist is at the dawn of history with no sense of selfhood.[219] The anxiety is the self-questioning by the act of writing - the question that engages with the question of being. According to Blanchot, the answer to this anxiety is the emptiness that the writer attains.[220] Heidegger in analyzing *Dasein* distinguishes it from anthropology and psychology. In terms of anthropology, man is defined first as 'an animal rationale, something living which has reason' which entails, for Heidegger, 'a kind of being understood in the sense of Being-present-at-hand.'[221] This kind of being that refers to Greek definition is problematic because *Dasein* is not something 'self-evidently given whose being is not to be questioned.'[222] But *Dasein* is the uncovering and disclosing of entities within the world; as Heidegger says:

> Being-true as Being uncovering, is a way of Being for *Dasein*.[223]

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[217] Stanley Corngold, *Franz Kafka, The Necessity of Form*, p. 22.
[218] Timothy Clark, *The Theory of Inspiration* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 240
[219] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Future and the Question of Art' in *The Space of Literature*, p. 219.
[220] Maurice Blanchot, *Faux Pas*, ed. by Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, trans. by Charlotte Mandell (California: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 5.
[221] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Marquarrie and Edward Robinson (India: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 74.
[222] Martin Heidegger, p. 74.
[223] Martin Heidegger, p. 263.

Second, *Dasein* is not man's Being as a theological entity which engages with the idea of transcendence. Such transcendence belongs to Christian theology which is problematic when we analyze man's Being ontologically. In terms of psychology, Heidegger says:

> If we posit an 'I' or subject as that which is proximally given, we shall completely miss the phenomenal content of *Dasein*.[224]

The problem of positing the 'subject' is that it does not put into question the Being of entities. For Heidegger, the nature of body, soul, spirit, and subject are not determined, so we cannot gather them when we come to the question of Being. Heidegger's understanding of *Dasein* puts Being beyond anthropology and psychology and is considered in a more broad sense. If we accept Timothy Clark' explanation of a writer's being beyond Heidegger's *Dasein*, it implies that the writer is in a state of nothingness which accepts no definition, that is to say, the writer's *Dasein* is at the beginning of being-in-the-world or at the point of throwness which Heidegger qualifies as the negative basis of being:

> This *'not'* belongs to the existential meaning of 'thrownness.' It itself, being a basis, is a nullity of itself.[225]

The nullity of being of the writer is characterized by Blanchot as 'the void.' The world, things, knowledge are only landmarks across this void.[226]

Regarding the being beyond 'being-in-world,' Kafka writes that the writer should stand outside of the time and place in which he sees nullity:

> We others, we, indeed, are held in our past and future […] whatever advantage the future has in size, the past compensate for in weight, and at their end the two are indeed no longer distinguishable, earliest youth later becomes distinct, as the future is, and the end of the future is really already experienced in all our sighs, and thus becomes the past. So this circle along whose rim we move almost closes. If we move to the side just once, in any chance forgetting of self, in some distraction, some fright, we have already lost it into space, until now we had our noses stuck into the tide of the times, now we step back,

[224] Martin Heidegger, p. 72.
[225] Martin Heidegger, p. 330.
[226] Maurice Blanchot, *Faux Pas*, p. 3.

> former swimmers, present walkers, and are lost. We are outside the law, no one knows it and yet everyone treats us accordingly. (*Diaries I* 27)

This state of forgetting self made by the act of writing situates the writer outside of time and place. The circle of time from past to future is the return of the same from which the writer takes himself outside in order to enter writing to attain emptiness.[227] Blanchot writes about this state of being outside-of-time provided by writing in which we forget the self:

> Time, time: the step not beyond that is not accomplished in time would lead outside of time, without this outside being intemporal, but there where time would fall, fragile fall, according to this 'outside of time in time' towards which writing would attract us, were we allowed, having disappeared from ourselves.[228]

Kafka as the 'former swimmer' and the 'present walker' is 'outside the law' of his worldly life; he lives in the emptiness beyond death. This is living in writing:

> Writing, in this sense, is a sleep deeper than that of death, and just as one would not and cannot tear the dead from their graves. (*Letters to Felice* 399)

When Kafka writes he is in the empty space beyond death. He has started to live in the space beyond death which, according to Blanchot, is to establish a relation of freedom.[229] If the human dies, it is nothing, but Kafka goes to the timeless time before his death in which he establishes a close rapport with his capacity to make art.[230] This capacity, for Blanchot, is to live in the void in order that art presents itself.

When the writer stands beyond 'being-in-the world,' Blanchot expresses the view that writing's function is:

> to trace a circle in the interior of which would come to be inscribed the

[227] Klossowiski in *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* reviews Nietzsche's experience of the Eternal Return in his own interpretation. The effacement of the Same and the destruction of time and present is revealed through the forgetting of any identity during the Eternal Return. See Pierre Klossowiski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, trans. by Daniel w. Smith (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 45.

[228]. Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, p. 1. Blanchot also writes: 'There would be a separation of time, like a separation of place, belonging neither to time nor to place. In this separation, we would come to the point of writing.' Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, p. 71.

[229] Maurice Blanchot, 'Kafka and the Work's Demand' in *The Space of Literature*, p. 95.

[230] Kevin Hart and Geoffrey Hartman, Introduction' in *The Power of Contestation: Perspective on Maurice Blanchot* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2004), p. 2.

outside of every circle.[231]

The outside of the circle is the interruption which makes an irreducible distance and foreignness. This new and strange separation calls for alterity which resides at outside - but the outside without outside that could be,

to speak according to the infinite dimension of language.[232]

The openness to the excluded in Kafka has been discussed by Adorno. The loss of selfhood in Kafka, according to Adorno, commands 'a model of dehumanization.' For Adorno, this dehumanization rejects all those which are considered as human including social character:[233]

The flight through man and beyond into non-human - that is Kafka's epic course.[234]

The new reality of selfhood implies this model of 'dehumanization.' Kafka is not limited to the psychological analysis of the subject but goes further to be the true cultural critic that Adorno distinguishes from the critic who himself become the agent of mass culture and culture industry:[235]

He does not stop at the subject as does psychology, but drives through to the bare material existence that emerges in the subjective sphere through the total collapse of a submissive consciousness, divested of all assertion.[236]

The popular culture which has been criticized by Adorno in his time is manipulated into a passive mass by cultural media like film, radio, and magazine. Adorno considers Kafka outside the mass culture in which man has a material existence and a 'submissive consciousness.' Outside this passive state, man is the inhuman, the dehumanized man. Kafka's

[231] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation,* pp. 78-9.
[232] Maurice Blanchot, p. 78.
[233] Theodor W. Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka' in *Prisms*, p. 255.
[234] Adorno, p. 252.
[235] The 'Culture Industry' is a term coined by Adorno(1903–1969) and Max Horkheimer (1895–1973), who argues in the final chapter of their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception', that popular culture is akin to a factory producing standardized cultural goods - through film, radio and magazine - to manipulate the masses into passivity; the easy pleasures available through consumption of popular culture make people docile and content, no matter how difficult their economic circumstances. See Theodor Adorno, and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. by John Cumming (London: Allen Lane, 1973).
[236] Adorno, p. 252.

'epic' is going toward this inhuman. This reminds us of what Blanchot argues about the writer and the work of art:

> In the work man speaks, but the work gives voice in the man to what does not speak: to the unnamable, the inhuman.[237]

Adorno, similar to Blanchot, believes that writer is in 'inhuman' condition. Kafka himself writes that he exists in a border:

> In the literary field I have experienced states […] in which I completely dwelt in every idea […] and not only felt myself at my boundary, but at the boundary of the human in general. (*Diaries I* 58)

Adorno sees this border as the transformation into otherness. The border is the 'living on,' neither here nor there; the state that is open to the 'other,' to what has been excluded:

> The self lives solely through transformation to otherness; as the secure residue of the subject which cuts itself off from everything alien it becomes the blind residue of the world. The more the 'I' of expressionism is thrown back upon itself, the more like the excluded world of things it becomes.[238]

Writer lives outside himself. He is the remainder of himself. There is always an otherness outside of the 'I' which has been excluded. He transforms into this otherness. Otherness resides at outside.

Stanley Corngold identifies Kafka's consciousness of detachment on the border or Adorno's 'otherness' as 'difference:'

> In writing about art, Kafka introduces the concept of a difference 'varying from itself,' writing, 'the point of view of art and that of life are different even in the artist himself' (*Dearest Father* 86). This inserts a potentiated factor of difference into that high thing, the relation of the artist to his art. The difference that varies from itself makes sense as the 'boundary', and Kafka's varying relation to it, of which Kafka often writes.[239]

[237] Maurice Blanchot, 'Characteristics of the Work of Art' in *The Space of Literature*, p. 232.
[238] Theodor W. Adorno, p. 262.
[239] Stanley Corngold, *Lambent Traces, Franz Kafka* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 174.

Kafka stands on the border between the human and the 'inhuman' and, according to Corngold, fluctuates between them. In fact, the border becomes a middle space. The border signifies the art or writing which produces difference - that is to say, makes writer alien to himself and transforms writer into otherness. Kafka writes in *Letters to Felice* that he 'is devised solely for writing.'[240] Kafka lives in literature as excess:

> Writing means revealing oneself to excess. (*Letters to Felice* 271)

Actually, when he is away from writing, he is in a void that is not open to excess:

> I am in a state of considerable confusion; it is because I have not done any writing for far too long and feel somewhat cut off from it - i.e., in a void. (*Letters to Felice* 231)[241]

Corngold argues that Kafka is supplied with a being which precedes and exceeds writing. That being which precedes his writing is suffering (the void); the being which exceeds his writing is surplus (excess). This surplus, for Corngold, is the space that 'bears the traces of another self or selves.'[242] Many figures in Kafka's stories invoke the collapse of the self and its dissolution. As Gerhard Kurz writes:

> The disintegration of the unified subject was the basis for Kafka's creative experiences of the self. Such terms as 'swarm', 'army', 'cry', 'jackdaws', 'orchestra', 'noise', 'we', 'nomadic people' are all metaphoric figures Kafka used to describe the dissolution of the subject into an inner plurality. The 'self' is a misleading term for a complex scene of conflicting 'voices', an incomprehensible and confused plurality of selves.[243]

This passage illustrates the multiplicity and plurality in the self. I suggest that the 'conflicting voices' does not make the confusion and incomprehensibility in which Kurz believes. The

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[240] Franz Kafka, *Letters to Felice*, p. 121.

[241] *Georges Bataille* has been seen as a philosopher of *'excess'* and transgression concerned with an interrogation of the nature of being and his work has been used to legitimate extremes of behavior. See Georges Bataille, *Vision of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939,* trans. by Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota, 1985).

[242] Stanley Corngold, *The Fate of the Self: German Writers and French Theory* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 167.

[243] Gerhard Kurz, 'Nietzsche, Freud, and Kafka' in *Reading Kafka, Prague, Politics, and Fin de Siecle,* ed. by Mark Anderson (New York: Schocken Books, 1989), p. 130.

plurality of selves implies the existing of the self in otherness, the creative nature of the self which operates by suspension and alteration, effacement and proliferation.

Chapter 4

The Act of Writing

Part II: Self and the Impossibility of Death

As I discussed in the last chapter, according to Blanchot, the human makes concepts of things in the outside world and uses language to represent those concepts; these concepts, then, become his knowledge of the world and of himself. The human by using language negates the singularity of the thing in order to be able to speak it. The human in this concept-making by language only gathers and brings into finiteness the infinite nature of the thing. In this way, he makes an 'I' who silences the thing and makes an identity for himself. Writing in this sense takes the writer outside his existence in this world and situates him in the space that may be thought to be the 'subjectivity' which Romanticism practices. Paul de Man, the deconstructive thinker who criticizes Romantic 'imagination,' explains that:

> It [imagination] marks a possibility for consciousness to exist entirely outside by and for itself, independently of all relationship with the outside world, without being moved by an intent aimed at a part of this world.[244]

But, in Blanchot's view, in this space, the possibility of the independent self who constructs the structure of the outside world and himself is removed. Writing as the 'imaginary space' reveals the emptiness of the subject or the self, since:

> here it is no longer the powerful subject that gives meaning to its world, but a passive human being that listen to the anonymous voice of the other.[245]

We should be reminded of what I argued in my first chapter - namely, that freed from the imposing power of human subjectivity, the language of the poet or the writer makes a condition in which being stands in the form of 'change' and 'becoming:'

> The language of gods is change and becoming, but mortal language is persistence, assertion of a duration that lasts, unity of time torn apart.[246]

[244] Paul de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, (New York: Columbia University Press), p. 16. De Man also writes on Blanchot and the impersonality of the writer. See Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, 2nd Ed. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).
[245] Ullrich M. Hasse, and William Large, *Maurice Blanchot* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 132.

The language of the poet or the writer as changing and becoming implies that the coming to being is not something that could be held together in unified form. Language here marks the beginning of human history but the saying of the singularity of things before being used by language comes when time is seen as atemporal. The singularity as changing and becoming cannot be expressed in language. The saying of singularity in Levinasian language, as Mark C. Taylor explains, could be the unsaying that ordinary language excludes.[247] Ulrich Hasse explains that poetic language or the language of writing in Blanchot expresses this inexpressibility of things:

> The tension in poetry is that it tries to bring something to language which cannot be said.[248]

The poem or the work as the sacred allows the singularity of being as changing and becoming to present itself. The thing in singularity whose inexpressibility is expressed in the poetry is like an image of itself; as Thomas Wall explains,

> Imaginary matter - matter that is its own image and that only appears in poetry (but remains unseen, unobserved, unperceived, silent) - is matter *as such*, in its *ipseity* or origin (What is *ipseity* if not origin, anteriority, something *as itself as such*, prior to its predicative involvements in the world?).[249]

The changing and becoming implies that the 'other' lies in being. *Ipseity* as origin, before ascribing any traits to thing or before language, is the thing in singularity which is inexpressible. I explained this notion in my first chapter as the 'worklessness' which signifies that language as the medium allows the undoing of being occur.[250] The poem or the work that tries to express this inexpressibility acts upon the writer who is deprived of the selfhood and makes him passive to receive the 'other' which the poem tries to present. This passivity is the self in the 'process of dying.' In other words, the writer needs always already the 'process of

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[246] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Sacred' Speech of Holderlin in *The Work of Fire*, trans. by Charlotte Mandell, (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 124.
[247] Mark C. Taylor, *Altarity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press,1987), p. 199.
[248] Ullrich Hasse and William Large, *Maurice Blanchot* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 59.
[249] Thomas Carl Wall, *Radical Passivity: Levinas, Blanchot, and Agamben* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 69.
[250] For the poetic language which lets the singularity of things communicate themselves, we can refer to Benjamin's idea of the 'pure name' by which he means 'the contemplation of things in which their language passes into man.' See Walter Benjamin, 'On Language as Such' in *Selected Writings*, trans. by Rodney Livingston and Others, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, Vol. 1(Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 72.

dying' in order to be able to write. In this chapter, I will discuss this process by which the writer exists.

Blanchot discusses the condition of the self when it is transformed by writing. He writes that the self experiences suspense between being and non-being:

> But why does the work demands this transformation? [...] We might also answer: because it deprives this living man (the writer) of the world by giving him the space of the imaginary to live in; and that is in part, in fact, the malaise of a man fallen outside of the world and, through this separation, floating eternally between being and nothingness, incapable henceforth of dying and incapable of being born.[251]

The writer is deprived of the sense of selfhood and transforms into the state of 'between being and nothingness.' Writing blurs the distinction of inside/outside. In this space, outside is in the inside. This space is neither interior nor exterior. Blanchot in the essay on Holderlin's poem, argues that,

> if the sacred is a radiant power whose law is scattering burst, the principle of that which appears, one understands that in foretelling the poet is already placed in the heart of a complete presence and that the approach of the sacred would be for it the approach of existence. But, for the present, the enigma takes an other form. For at the beginning, the poet is not yet, for he himself depends on Totality in order to exist and the Totality depends on his mediation in order to be a Totality. Now, existing as 'not yet,' he has seized, forcasted the coming of the sacred, which is the principle of this coming itself, which is the anterior coming to every 'something which comes' and by which 'everything' comes, the Totality comes.[252]

The power which is called 'sacred' by Blanchot is the poem or the work that brings 'Totality' by gathering and scattering at the same time. The sacred or the poem in the act of 'scattering

[251] Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, trans. by Charlotte Mandel (California: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 216.
[252] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Sacred Speech of Holderlin' in *The Work of Fire*, p. 122.

burst' calls the coming of the Totality (the cosmos). The sacred, by being before and after everything, allows being to stand in a kind of 'proximity' which is never unified in totality:

> The whole oeuvre of Holderlin discloses the consciousness of an anterior power exceeding men as well as gods, even those who prepare the cosmos to be 'at once.'[253]

The poem or the work which allows being to stand appropriates and disappropriates itself. [254] Thus, 'proximity' implies the impossibility of gathering together and closure of completion.

The poet or the writer as the mediator who has a 'not yet' existence forecasts the coming of the sacred. The writer's being is sacrificed to be in the 'proximity' of completion, that is to say, being as such, self-present as such, that which escapes from every mediation.[255] The poet (the writer) vanishes at the moment the world as untotalized totality appears through him by poem (the work). The poet's being is negated when this power fulfills its work:

> The poet destroys himself, and he destroys his language that he lives, and no longer possessing a before and an after, he is suspended in emptiness itself.[256]

The poet (the writer) must die and it should be a death without death in order that the poem or the work is produced. He comes into existence by this 'process of dying' that is never completed. To put this another way, as Blanchot writes, the poem makes him undergo a dying:

> between being and nothingness, incapable henceforth of dying and incapable of being born.[257]

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[253] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Sacred' Speech of Holderlin' in *The Work of Fire*, p. 119. I have used the translation quoted in Herman Rapaport, *Heidegger, Derrida: Reflections on Time and Language,* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p. 118.

[254] Herman Rapaport writes that Heidegger by a linguistic analysis of the word 'logos' in Heraclitus comes to a unified formulation: *logos*=logic=reason=will to power=essence of man. According to this formulation, for Heidegger, the essence of humankind is 'logos.' Heidegger writes that 'logos' has to be comprehended in terms of gathering and falling away. This view about 'logos' is unlike the notion of logic in which entities are systematized and unified. According to this view of 'logos,' Heidegger does not consider 'man' as a controlling ego whose essence is logic or reason, but a collection of related attributes that in their proximity to one another have achieved both nearness and distance. See Herman Rapaport, *Heidegger, Derrida: Reflections on Time and Language*, p. 105.

[255] Joseph Suglia, *Holderlin and Blanchot on Self-Sacrifice* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2004), p. 68.

[256] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Sacred Speech of Holderlin' in *The Work of Fire*, p. 129.

[257] Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, p. 216.

Outside the hackneyed theme of the life after death or the second birth which involves metaphysics, the poet's dying necessitates the opening of being into the space where the possibility of invention comes.

In the 'process of dying,' the self through the act of writing will be the incoherent entity exposed to any exteriority. In Blanchot's expression, as Libertson writes, the totality and identity of the self are replaced with the 'alterity' which signifies as standing 'between:'

> The Other is the impossibility of closure which makes possible an alterity that 'stands between.' It is a becoming - other and a heteronomy which precedes and exceeds the correlation and unification of dialectical opposition. Alterity is the fact that a term is not alone, but also not in an *ensemble* or relation with its opposite. [258]

Self enters into communication with the Other. This situation is not reducible to the dialectical process of opposition because the Other which is present in this communication is not a constituted or differentiated other. The Other is the 'alterity' which is always arriving. There is no reciprocal relationship between the self and other.' No mutual approach can be found in the way that they come close to each other to form a closed structure. They are always 'approaching.' Thus, the tautological process of self's formation is brought into no identity and totality but is placed 'in-between.' This state is always in-coming.

Libertson explains this condition in Blanchot as the 'proximity' or approach which characterizes the suspense of the self:

> Blanchot and Levinas invoke the notion of a communicational alterity whose inaccessibility is also its incumbence or weight. The factor in communication which escapes totalization and recedes into indefinition or ambiguity approaches as it escapes. Its distance is a contact, its inaccessibility is an involvement. It is 'near' or 'close' to the subjectivity created by communication- without this subjectivity being 'near' or 'close' to this inaccessible element.[259]

[258] Joseph Libertson, *Proximity:Levinas, Blanchot, Bataille and Communication* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publisher, 1982), p. 203.
[259] Joseph Libertson, p. 3.

It is the communication with the 'other' in writing which closes and opens the self to the 'other'. 'Proximity' which signifies neither close nor far shows that the self is irreducible either to disappearance or totalization. In the process of formation through writing, the self in communication means that while the self is distant from the 'other' it is in immediate proximity with the 'other' and its action is manifested as an oscillation which is dynamic at the same time. This reminds us of 'the empty and animated space' in Blanchot's expression.[260] The writer is defined as the dynamic animated space in the 'proximity' which is made by communication with the 'other.' Derrida, in his reading of Nietzsche in *Spurs: Nietzsche's Style*, speaks of action in distance. In philosophy, truth is the object of desire and specially a desire for possession. In Nietzsche, woman is truth as the beautiful ghost who lives in the place where a man finds his happier 'departed self' as a 'spiritlike intermediate being' which moves over existence. Woman puts the man in distance from himself by which the distance acts to create the in-coming existence outside the egoistic self which tries to possess everything:

> The magic and the most powerful effect of woman is, in philosophical language, action at a distance, *actio in distans;* but this requires first of all, above all - *distance*.[261]

Derrida considers such an action at a distance for woman to claim that woman seduces from distance and keeps her distance in order not to be possessed because there is always desire to possess truth as an object:

> A woman seduces from a distance. In fact, distance is the very element of her power […] if it is necessary to keep one's distance from the feminine operation, from the *action in distans*, it is perhaps because the <woman> is not a determinable identity. Perhaps woman is not some thing which announces itself from a distance. Perhaps woman is […] distance itself, […] the distanciation of distance, the deferment of distant, the de-ferment, it is in fact the annihiliation […] which constitutes the distant itself, the veiled enigma of proximation [...] She engulfs and distorts all vestige of essentiality,

[260] Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, pp. 215-16.
[261] Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, *The Gay Science*, trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).

> of identity, of property.[262]

For Derrida in his reading of Nietzsche, the woman's identity as a property which signifies the object of possession is annihilated and she, without having identity, keeps anyone who encounters her in distance from herself. One only approximates her without possessing, since she is not the single truth. She is only proximation, being in process, being in distance. The woman in Derrida signifies 'writing' which plays the same role of suspending the ultimate referent of self-identity.

In this sense, Jacques Derrida's concept of 'spacing' can also explain Blanchot's concept of dying. Derrida writes:

> I specify again that spacing is a concept which also, but not exclusively, carries the meaning of a productive, positive, generative force […] It is not only the interval, the space constituted between two things (which is the usual sense of spacing), but also spac*ing*, the operation, or in any event, the movement of setting aside. It marks what is set aside from itself, what interrupts every self-identity, every punctual assemblage of the self, every self homogeneity, self interiority.[263]

Derrida considers a productive dimension for spacing, like Blanchot's 'animated space.' The self will find discontinuity because it cannot form an interiority which marks its closure or assemblage. 'Spac*ing*' (Derrida uses *'ing'* to indicate its generative force) conditions the self in the always already constituting process. The word is both verb and noun. What Derrida implies here is the presence of an 'other' or 'alterity' which is unpresentable. 'Alterity' is something irreducible to being; it is not a determined being. The self is always dependent on the 'other' (persons or outside world) in order to find an identity. This is the supplement at the self's very origin.[264] In other words, the 'other' gives it identity. Thus, the self is always in this process of spacing.

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[262] Jacques Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Style*, trans. by Barbara Harlow (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), pp. 49-50. I have omitted the German words.
[263] Jacques Derrida*, Positions*, trans. by Alan Bass (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 124.
[264] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University, 1976), p. 153. For further reading on the supplementary nature of the self in Derrida, see Nicholas Royle, *Jacques Derrida* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 47-61.

The process of dying which the work demands situates the writer in a 'radical passivity' in which he is receptive of the work.[265] It implies that the work comes to existence before the writer. Writing is this 'passivity' by which the writer lives in proximity which means neither being nor non-being. In *The Writing of the Disaster*, Blanchot discusses writing as the 'passivity' which exposes the self to the 'dying process'. 'Passivity' is neither a word nor a concept, like Derrida's 'differance.' It is neither active nor passive with the restricted meaning of reception and action:

> Passivity, the contrary of activity: such is the ever-restricted field of our reflections. We might coin a word for the absolute passiveness of total abjection - *le subissement,* which is [patterned on *subir*, 'to undergo,' but is also] simply a variation of *subitement* ['suddenly'], or the same word crushed; we might invent that term, *le subissement,* in an attempt to name the inert immobility of certain states said to be psychotic, the *patior* in passion, servile obedience, the nocturnal receptivity of mystics - dispossession, that is, the self wrested from itself, the detachment whereby one is detached from detachment, or again the fall (neither chosen nor accepted) outside the self. Still, these situations, even if some are at the limit of knowable and designate a hidden face of humanity, speak to us hardly at all of what we seek to understand by letting this characterless word be pronounced *passivity*.[266]

Passivity in religious or psychological meaning does not correspond to this 'passivity.' It is not the self-denial of mysticism in which the self is detached from itself in order to unite with a transcendental being. Neither is it a sudden debasement of the psyche that shatters the self. According to Blanchot, 'passivity' may be the part which always remains outside and does not let self be completed as a totality. This signifies that it is always in completion and destruction. In other words, this part becomes the whole self which is in communication with the 'other' which is beyond being. This part takes the form of exteriority but is the inside:

> Passivity is, perhaps (perhaps), that 'inhuman' part of man which, destitute of

[265] The 'radical passivity' is the title of the book which explains Blanchot's idea of 'passivity' in writing. See Thomas Carl Wall, *Radical Passivity: Levinas, Blanchot, and Agamben*.
[266] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p. 15.

> power, separated from unity, could never accommodate anything able to appear or show itself. This part of man makes no sign or indication of itself and thus, through dispersion and defection, always falls short of what can be stated, even provisionally, about it.[267]

This non-existential part of the human cannot be presented because it has no involvement with the world. It is as a new origin but not the origin which comes in the beginning or even at the end.[268] This new origin as 'passivity' enters into the involvement with the 'other' which makes it non-origin. Thus, the self will be irreducible to totalization because 'passivity' is the state of a 'not yet,' waiting for coming. The self in passivity which is in communication with the 'other' becomes 'only this relation, and not selfhood or identity.'[269]

For Blanchot, 'passivity' is the condition of being. Being in this condition is outside of time and place:

> Passivity is measureless: it is being when being is worn down past the nub - the passivity of a past which has never been, come back again. It is the disaster defined not as an event of the past, but as the immemorial past which returns, dispersing by its return the present.[270]

The zero point of the 'immemorial past,' the time when you are dead already, is 'passivity,' the state which is not located anywhere. When it returns it is its first time, since it does not pass. Everything always comes again but anew. It cannot be situated in time. In this sense, self in the state of 'passivity' has no memory as the place of the past experience; it is a memory without memory - what Blanchot calls 'the passivity of the immemorial unknown.'[271] In this 'immemorial time,' forgetfulness is before everything, before memory. It does not come after memory in order to remove what has been inscribed:

> If forgetfulness precedes memory or perhaps found it, or has no connection with it at all, then to forget is not simply a weakness, a failing, an absence or void. No, forgetfulness would be not emptiness, but neither negative nor positive:

[267] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, p. 16.
[268] Ullrich Hasse, and William Large, *Maurice Blanchot* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 53.
[269] Maurice Blanchot, p. 23.
[270] Maurice Blanchot, p. 17.
[271] Maurice Blanchot, p. 66.

> the passive demand that neither welcomes nor withdraws the past, but, designating there what has never taken place (just as it indicates in the yet to come that which will never be able to find its place in any present), refers us to nonhistorical forms of time, to the other of all tenses, to their eternal or eternally provisional indecision bereft of destiny, without presence.[272]

Blanchot's 'forgetfulness' seems to have an originary state which is dispersed throughout the whole existence of the self. The self in this condition of 'forgetfulness' never have memory as the place of the past experiences which can be recollected in the present. 'Forgetfulness' signifies an 'extended present.' This means that the self is always in the process of experiencing events in life and forgetting them at the same time. In this condition, it seems that nothing takes place and nothing has come to presence. The self is always waiting for events which have not yet taken place.

The Dying Self in *The Instant of My Death* and *The Metamorphosis*

Two texts by Blanchot and Kafka may illustrate the 'radical passivity' and the 'dying process' of the writer. Blanchot's *The Instant of My Death* and Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* can be compared in this sense. As the second sense, these two texts can be compared because both illustrate the state of the self irrespective of the act of writing. In fact, these two senses are indissociable. It can be said that the work produces (places in suspense) the self and this self produces the work. This point is evident in Blanchot's *The Writing of the Disaster*. Blanchot by arguing that the 'primal scene' describes the state of the self in writing and by the concept of disaster writes about the disaster that the writing imposes on the self (I will take up the argument of 'the primal scene' in chapter six).

In *The Instant of my Death (L'Instant de ma Mort,)* Blanchot recounts how aged 42 or 43 years old he was living in the French countryside, and for complicated reasons was arrested with a bunch of people who were occupying a French chateau and were taken out by German guards and lined up to be shot. But they thought that Blanchot, because he spoke more elevated French, was the proprietor of the chateau, and some sort of landed gentry; so he was allowed to leave. The others died while he got away with it. [273] According to Derrida,

[272] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, p. 85.

[273] *Interview with Simon Critchley, Senior Lecturer in Philosophy, University of Essex* Conducted by: Tom McCarthy (General Secretary, INS), Venue: Office of Anti-Matter, Austrian Cultural Institute, London, Date: 29/03/01, Present: Tom McCarthy, Simon Critchley, Corin Sworn, Anthony Auerbach, Penny McCarthy,

when Blanchot felt the rifles aimed at him, he felt a lightness of being, of neither mortality nor eternity, which was almost joyous.[274] And that, too, is an intolerable thought for Blanchot.

In this text, we find elements of literature, philosophy, historical engagement, testimony, and, it seems, autobiography. What I am concerned with in the text is the 'radical passivity' of the narrator in the impossible process of dying when he is going to be shot by the Nazi lieutenant. Blanchot, in writing on dying, reveals 'passivity' as a void of nothingness without nothingness:

> Dying means: you are dead already, in an immemorial past, of a death which was not yours, which you have thus neither known nor lived, but under the threat of which you believe you are called upon to live; you await it henceforth in the future, constructing a future to make it possible at last-possible as something that will take place and will belong to the realm of experience. [275]

Death belongs to no one; it is of everybody, since dying removes the individuality of each person. The 'I' of a person becomes everybody and 'I' never dies but one dies.[276] The narrator in the text experiences the lightness of being which is a dying into 'passivity.' He is neither dead nor alive. 'Dying' does not occur to him after living. In other words, this dying does not come after life or gets its meaning because it is after life or puts an end to life. In the passivity of dying, there is no starting point of dying or determined end. 'Dying' starts from and dwells nowhere and at no time. Blanchot discusses this nowhere in Rilke's poem which is called 'nowhere without no.' For Blanchot, it is the 'world's inner space' or 'Open' that could be approached if we leave our consciousness, since consciousness for the sake of its stability in the world makes concept of everything outside itself by which it possesses them. But consciousness does not get knowledge of what the outside world really is. Consciousness only stays at the surface in the world by this concept-making which is only the representation of things in the outside world not things in themselves. It implies that consciousness must be

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Victoria Scott, Paul Perry, Alexander Hamilton, Jen Wu, Others. I use this interview because of its biographical information about the story.

[274] Jacques Derrida,'Demeure,' trans. by Elizabeth Rottenberg in *The Instant of My Death & Demeure*, ed. by Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 69.

[275] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, p. 65.

[276] Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 241. This point is against Heidegger who believes in the possibility of death. Derrida argues that when Heidegger says 'with death, *Dasein* awaits itself,' *Dasein* is directed toward a completely other that implies it never arrives. This would be the impossibility of death. See Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, trans. by Thomas Dutoit (California: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 64-5.

abandoned so that we enter into the 'world's inner space.'[277] In Blanchot's *The Instant of My Death*, the 'nowhere without no' is not on the border between living and death:

> I know - do I know - that the one at whom the Germans were already aiming, awaiting but the final order, experienced then a feeling of extraordinary lightness, a sort of beatitude (nothing happy, however) - sovereign elation? The encounter of death with death?[278]

The narrator experiences the passivity of a 'death with death' which reminds us of Blanchot's phrase, 'you are already dead.' In 'nowhere without no,' he does not come from consciousness to an encounter with death; neither is he not born into a new life after this death. There remains no after and before. In Derrida's expression, it is a sort of triumph of life,

> a sort of triumph of life at the edge of death. The triumph must be excessive […] the excessive double affirmation, *of* triumphant life, of death which triumph *over* life.[279]

This 'passivity' is a life with double direction toward life, 'triumphant life,' and toward death, 'death which triumph *over* life.' It is the life that overcomes death and at the same time a death that conquers life. Derrida intends to use *of* paradoxically as *of* and *over*. In the former, life is victorious (the triumph of life) and, in the latter, death overcomes life (the triumph over life). This triumph can be the 'passivity' which opens life to an excess outside consciousness that, according to Blanchot, links us to the need for stability in the world by staying at the surface or,

> the tendency to take account which necessarily becomes an inclination to account and to reduce everything to accounts.[280]

Derrida comments that Blanchot's narrator remains in this lightness of being. The perseverance by simultaneous accomplishing and failure opens to an excess. The excess of 'passivity' means that the self always seeks something or a remainder outside itself which is

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[277] Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, pp. 136-8. For Kevin Hart, this 'nowhere' reminds him of the primal scene. See Kevin Hart, *The Dark Gaze* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 20.
[278] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Instant of My Death', trans. by Elizabeth Rottenberg in *The Instant of My Death & Demeure*, ed. by Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 5.
[279] Jacques Derrida, 'Living On' trans. by James Hulbert in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1979), p. 95.
[280] Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, p. 137.

the rest of itself. The remainder is not the production of a lingering of 'dying,' but it is the outcome of an excess that steps beyond but is still not beyond. This reminds us of the title of Blachot's book, *Le pas au-dela*, in which the word *pas* means both 'step' and 'not': the step (not) beyond. The excess of 'passivity' is not active the same as the negativity of death in the dialectic system of Hegel as 'Thesis=Identity, Antithesis=Negativity, and Synthesis=Totality.'[281] Unlike Hegel's dialectical negativity, death (Antithesis) does not negate life (Identity) in order to produce another life (Totality). It is not also inactive in the sense of being unable to be productive. Thus, it is accomplishment and failure at the same time. It neither forms a being nor a non-being. Although it is suspended between these two states, it is an excess of being as a step (not) beyond: stepping forward and drawing back.

The remainder of 'passivity' is perhaps something that remains outside of being that makes being both possible and impossible; it is, Blanchot writes,

> that 'inhuman' part of man which, destitute of power, separated from unity, could never accommodate anything able to appear or show itself.[282]

The remainder in excess is that never which is eliminated and always already remains. It is unable to cease to be and at the same time unable to make a being. The 'passivity' in excess makes the narrator neither remain nor disappear. This part is similar to Derrida's idea of the gift of death that cannot be presented:

> The gift of death remains irreducible to presence or to presentation.[283]

This should be distinguished from dying as remaining between death and life. Something remains that is outside of life/death opposition. Joseph Libertson who compares Levinas, Blanchot, and Bataille explains the idea of 'cadaver' in Bataille:

> The cadaver is a *reste* or remainder, and a spectacle of decomposition: the uneliminable exuberance of communication, and subjectivity's inability. Death is the irony of that which annihilates without annihilating.[284]

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[281] Alexander Kojeve, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, ed. by Allan Bloom, trans. by James H. Nicholas, Jr. (New York, London: Basic Books, 1969), p. 134.
[282] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, p. 16.
[283] Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death* trans. by David Wills (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 65.
[284] Joseph Libertson, *Proximity: Levinas, Blanchot, Bataille and Communication*, p. 69.

The 'cadaver' refers to the custom of burying bodies which Georges Bataille discusses. For Bataille, the 'cadaver' means a remainder denoting not only the absence of human being but also the presence of a being in this absence. This presence reveals the absence of being and its excess in being. He writes:

> A cadaver is *nothing*, but this object, this cadaver is marked in its appearance [*des l'abord*, in the approach to it] by the sign *nothing*. This object is less than *nothing*, worse than *nothing*.[285]

This remainder has a persistent appearance which makes it not *nothing*, but more than it. It is a being in absence which is approaching forever. It is the excess which remains in its absence. This 'cadaver,' for Bataille, marks the incompletion of being and its communication with alterity: the approach of alterity. For Blanchot, the remainder or 'cadaver' is thought in his idea of image. What is the 'image?'

> When there is nothing, the image finds in this nothing its necessary condition, but there it disappears. Image needs the neutrality and the fading of the world; it wants everything to return to the indifferent deep where nothing is affirmed; it tends toward the intimacy of what subsists in the void.[286]

The 'image,' in this definition, is not secondary to the object or not something that comes after the object. The object should be removed from the predicates ascribed to it in the world. When it becomes nothing the 'image' becomes possible because the 'image' reveals the object in its singularity, in its beginning which is becoming and changing. Blanchot writes:

> But when we are face to face with things themselves does it not also sometimes happen that we abandon ourselves to what we see? Bereft of power before this presence suddenly strangely mute and passive, are we not at its mercy? Indeed, this can happen, but it happens because the thing we stare at has foundered, sunk into its image, and the image returned into that deep fund of impotence to which everything reverts. The 'real' is defined by our relation to it which is always alive. The real always leaves us the initiative, addressing in us the power

[285] Georges Bataille, *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. by Mary Dalwood (New York: Walker, 1962), p. 57.
[286] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Two Versions of the Imaginary' in *The Space of Literature*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 254.

> to begin, that free communication with beginning which we are.[287]

The 'image' is the beginning of coming into existence of the thing itself which reveals itself in the always already process of beginning. This is reality of being. When the human becomes passive so that he could prepare himself to allow the thing present itself, he enters into the 'free communication with beginning' in which he arrives at being without closure. This is felt by the narrator in Blanchot's other text, *When the Time Comes*:

> How terrible things are, when they come out of themselves, into a resemblance in which they have neither the time to corrupt themselves nor the origin to find themselves and where, eternally their own likenesses, they do not affirm themselves but rather, beyond the dark flux and reflux of repetition, affirm the absolute power of this resemblance, which is no one's and which has no name and no face.[288]

Things become image in the sense that they resemble themselves. In this resemblance, they are always already in repetition with difference because they return to a new origin every time. For Blanchot, the 'cadaver' or the remainder is the image that suspends its relation with any place:

> Death suspends the relation to place, even though the deceased rests heavily in his spot as if upon the only basis that is left to him. To be precise, this basis lacks, the place is missing, the corps is not in its place. Where is it? It is not here, and yet it is not anywhere else. Nowhere? But then nowhere is here. The cadaverous presence establishes a relation between here and nowhere.[289]

The narrator in Blanchot's text has lost his relation with the world and is like a cadaver or an image that is in its beginning, actually, in communication with beginning. This state of remaining is in excess of becoming. This should remind us of the 'transformation' that the work of art demands from the writer. If writing is possible, it is when the writer becomes the 'cadaver' like the excess in 'passivity. In this state, the work reveals itself like an image which establishes a relation with nowhere. Blanchot writes this text to show the relationship

[287] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Two Versions of the Imaginary' in *The Space of Literature*, p. 255.
[288] Maurice Blanchot, *When the Time Comes*, trans. by Lydia Davis (New York: Station Hill Press, 1985), p. 71.
[289] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Two Versions of the Imaginary' in *The Space of Literature*, p. 256.

between the work and the writer. Death as the lightness of being for the narrator is the state of the writer in writing the work.

The remainder is the product of the communication between death and death or what the narrator calls 'the encounter of death with death?'[290] The narrator in excess is already dead and encounters death. A being does not encounter a non-being, but a non-being confronts a non-being. This 'dying' is persistence in its impossibility. Subjectivity disappears without disappearance. If we speak in terms of interiority and exteriority, subjectivity as interiority has the exterior in itself and moves toward that at the same time. This does not make a subjectivity to be in suspense but in a situation of excess that is always already in coming, still to come. This 'passivity' places the narrator in an excess of transforming into the 'other.' The 'other' is the remainder that always already remains. The remainder or the 'other' is irreducible to being or non-being. This makes it different from the 'dying process' as remaining between.

The excess of 'passivity' signifies waiting for the 'other to come. This notion can be perceived in the concept of 'aporia' by which Derrida thinks through the impossibility of death for Heidegger's *Dasein*. Derrida finds the 'aporia' in a plural logic - hence the title of his book *Aporias* means the state of being at a loss and at the same time impassible. Derrida thinks that this logic of aporia works in death when he writes death is the state of losing, but the impossible loss because it is an impassible border. Derrida considers three senses for the 'aporia' when death happens:

> In one case, the nonpassage resembles an impermeability; it would stem from the opaque existence of an uncrossable border: a door that does not open or that only opens according to an unlocatable condition. In another case, the nonpassage, the impass or aporia, stems from the fact that there is no limit. There is not yet or there is no longer a border to cross, no opposition between two sides: the limit is too porous, permeable, and indeterminate. Finally, the third type of aporia, the impossible, the antinomy, or the contradiction, is a nonpassage because its elementary milieu does not allow for something that could be called passage, step, walk, gait, displacement, or replacement, a

[290]Maurice Blanchot, 'The Instant of My Death' in *The Instant of My Death & Demeure*, p. 5.

kinesis in general.[291]

In these three senses, it could be understood that something as border both does not exist and exists at the same time. Thus, the meaning of crossing a limit or a border will be impossible. We no longer speak of passage or crossing beyond but simultaneously the border for passing exists. This means that the limit or the border is dispersed and permeable. It cannot be located anywhere but exists everywhere. The 'aporia' can explain 'passivity' which means the impossibility of dying.

In Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, the process of Gregor's dying and 'passivity' of self can be traced in Kafka's non-fiction writings. In one of his letters to Max Brod, Kafka articulates his idea of writing and dying:

> What a weak or even nonexistent ground I live on, over a darkness out of which the dark power emerges when it wills and, without bothering about my stammering, destroys my life. Writing maintains me, but is it not more correct to say that it maintains this sort of life?[292]

The word 'maintain,' the same as 'demeure' (lingering) in Blanchot's *The Instant of My Death*, brings Kafka and Blanchot close concerning the dying as impossible process. The life that is maintained is the destruction of life. The former life is the dying process and the latter is the life of living thing. Kafka does not articulate the life/death opposition because the dark power of writing maintains him in the other sort of life. This also does not signify the theme of life in death which implies the life that death gives. This 'demeure' of dying is neither life nor death. It is a metamorphosis of which Kafka writes in his letter to Brod in July 1922:

> What a naive person sometimes wishes: 'I would like to die and watch the others cry over me,' is what such a writer constantly experiences: he dies (or he does not live) and continually cries over himself. From this comes a terrible fear of death, which does not have to manifest itself as the fear of death but can also emerges as the fear of change.[293]

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[291] Jacques Derrida, *Aporias*, trans. by Thomas Dutoit (California: Stanford University Press, 1993), pp. 20-21.
[292] Franz Kafka, *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston (London: John Calder, 1978), p. 333. I have used the translation by Stanley Corngold because he has used the word 'maintain' which makes me connect it to Derrida's idea of lingering. See Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis: the Translation, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*, trans and ed. by Stanley Corngold (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), p. 73.

The fear of death, for a naive person, springs from viewing death as the end of life in the usual meaning, but the writer wants to experience the real death which is the fear of transformation by writing. The dying which the writer wishes for is neither the death (the end of life) of a naive person whom the others cry over, nor is it in life because he is continuously outside of life and mourns himself. What makes this dying to be neither life nor death is the 'change' or 'metamorphosis' which is 'lingering' without being accomplished. This continuous change is different from the fear of death as the end of life because Kafka fears not to live the life of a writer which is always dying and mourning. He writes to Brod:

> He [the writer] is terribly afraid of dying because he has not yet lived. By this I don't mean that to live, wife and child and field and cattle are necessary.[294]

He has not yet lived the life of dying, the life of writing. The life of dying is neither life nor death nor suspense. This is the life with double direction toward life, the experience of excess in 'triumphant life,' and Blanchot's 'inner space.'[295] Kafka writes that writing means exposing oneself to excess.[296] Kafka continues to write in the letter that:

> all my life I have been dead, and now I shall really die […] the writer, hence, a thing without existence, consigns the old corpse, corpse from the beginning, to the grave.[297]

From the beginning, in the 'immemorial past,' the writer has no basis, no substance and never finds being in writing in the future. This is why I have quoted the passage in which Kafka says from birth to the grave the writer is a corpse. The point that the writer has been always already dead and is really dying reminds us of Blanchot's view of dying:

> Dying means: you are dead already, in an immemorial past, of a death which was not yours, which you have thus neither known nor lived, but under the threat of which you believe you are called upon to live; you await it henceforth in the future, constructing a future to make it possible at last - possible as something that will take place and will belong to the realm of experience. [298]

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[293] Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis: the Translation, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*, p. 73.
[294] Franz Kafka, p. 73.
[295] Jacques Derrida, 'Living On' trans. by James Hulbert in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1979), p. 95.
[296] Franz Kafka, *Letters to Felice*, ed. by Erich Hellex and Jurgen Born, trans. by James Stern and Elizabeth Duckworth (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 271.
[297] Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis: the Translation, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*, p. 74.

Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* illustrates this 'process of dying.' In this text, Gregor Samsa wakes up one morning and finds himself changed into a monstrous vermin. He has been a travelling sales-man before his metamorphosis. He feels misery at his situation as a traveling sales-man because he finds himself 'a tool of the boss, without brains or backbone.'[299] The word 'tool' in German is *Kreatur* [creature]. Stanley Corngold in a footnote to this word reminds that:

> Both German words introduce an atmosphere of animality - of displaced animality, for it is Gregor, after all, who is an animal.[300]

Gregor's metamorphosis has not occurred only in this morning and for the first time. He has always already been in a process of metamorphosis. All his life he has been in this animal state. In his new state, he has metamorphosed perpetually. As Corngold writes,

> the continual alteration of Gregor's body suggests ongoing metamorphosis.[301]

He locks himself in his room and the manager (who has come to investigate his absence from work) and his family are behind the door. Behind the door is human society and inside is the process of dying as metamorphosis:

> They had probably left it open, as is the custom in homes where a great misfortune has occurred. (11)

Stanley Corngold, in a footnote to this sentence, writes that according to Jewish mystics, when a death happen in a house, the doors must be left open to facilitate the exit of the Angel of Death (11). This implies that the metamorphosis for Kafka is a death. Later in the text, this door is left open, but Gregor is not able to go through it. This door as a passage becomes uncrossable. It remains neither external nor internal, but symbolizes the state of 'living on' which is neither life nor death. In this sense, death becomes the process of dying which never means the end of life or returning to life; as Kafka writes in his diary:

> It is not a death, alas, but the eternal torments of dying.[302]

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[298] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, p. 65.
[299] Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis: the Translation, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*, p. 5. All the quotations are from this edition.
[300] Franz Kafka, p. 5.
[301] Stanely Corngold, 'Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*: Metamorphosis of Metaphor' in Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis: the Translation, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*, p. 86.

The suspended state of Gregor shows his process of dying. He is between a metamorphosed self and human society. Although he has changed into a vermin, he still has the memory of his past and wants to go back to his work which is evident when he explains his strange situation for the manager in the doorway. As another example, when the new cleaning woman calls Gregor 'you old dung beetle' he does not answer to this form of address because he does not want to be recognized as a vermin:

> To forms of address like these Gregor does not respond but remained immobile where he was. (33)

In spite of Gregor's hatred of his life in human society, he still wishes to return to his previous life:

> And for a little while he lay quietly, breathing shallowly, as if expecting, perhaps, from the complete silence the return of things to the way they really and naturally were. (33)

It is as if Kafka is looking for a life, 'but not the life of wife and child and field and cattle'(73). He wishes neither life nor death but the maintaining, the living on, the dying which is:

> a weak or even nonexistent ground . Writing maintains me, but isn't it more correct to say that it maintains this sort of life? (73)

If we consider this text a kind of autobiography, it shows the experience of the writer's dying process while the writer wants to keep his life.'[303] That is why Gregor moves between his past and new life. He is in metamorphosis but tries to keep his human consciousness.

Gregor's new physical characteristics illustrate his suspended condition. In his new body, he has numerous uncontrollable legs:

> He would have needed hands and arms to lift himself up, but instead of that he had only his numerous little legs, which were in every different kind of perpetual motion and which, besides, he could not control. (6)

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[302] This sentence is from Kafka's *Diaries* translated in Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis: the Translation, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*, p. 70.
[303] For further discussion, see John Gregg, *Maurice Blanchot and the Literature of Transgression* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 38.

Numerous little legs around a mindless body are opposed to the rationality of human society. Here we have a deconstruction of the rationality/irrationality opposition.

Perhaps, this situation is better perceived via the notion of the rhizome by which Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari describe man in post-modern society. In a critique of rationalistic philosophy and its relationship with State, they criticize its discourse which confirms the sovereign judgment of State, the stable subjectivity legislated by 'good' sense, the rocklike identity, and 'universal' truth.[304] They criticize the idea of a stable thinking subject that creates concepts and to which it lends its own presumed attributes of sameness and constancy. They replace this closed thinking subject with a subjectivity which is capable of 'nomad thought:'

> Nomad thought does not immure itself in the edifice of an ordered interiority; it moves freely in an element of exteriority. It does not repose on identity; it rides difference. It does not respect the artificial division between the three domains of representation; subject, concept, and being; the concepts it creates do not merely reflect the eternal form of a legislating subject, but are defined by a communicable force in relation to which their subject, to the extent that they can be said to have one, is only secondary. They do not reflect upon the world but are immersed in a changing state of things.[305]

Nomad thought does not reduce multiplicity to the One of identity. It synthesizes a multiplicity of elements without effacing their heterogeneity. The communicable force of nomadic thought is an affirmation which arrives from outside to break constraints and open new vistas. Nomad thought works through a rhizomic network. By rhizome, Deleuze and Guattari mean an open system which is not just a mass of elements.[306] The rhizome is:

> reducible neither to the One nor the multiple. It is not the One that becomes two or even directly three, four, five, etc. it is not a multiple derived from the One, or to which One is added (n+1). It is composed not of units but of

[304] Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, trans. by Hugh Tamlinson, Barbara Haberjam, and Eliot Ross Albert (London: Continuum, 2006).
[305] Brian Massumi, 'Translator's Forward' in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. xii.
[306] Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, trans. by Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), p. 32.

> dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle from which it grows and which it over spills. It constitutes linear multiplicities with *n* dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plane of consistency, and from which the One is always subtracted (*n*-1). When a multiplicity of this kind changes dimension, it necessarily changes in nature as well, undergoes a metamorphosis.[307]

Metamorphosis is the characteristic of this open system. It works by the process of dying because metamorphosis happens in nature in the rhizome. This change is not the object of reproduction. It is neither external nor internal reproduction. It operates by variation and expansion. This open system is in contrast to centered systems with hierarchical modes of communication and pre-established paths. The rhizome is an acentered, nonhierarchical system without an organizing memory. This system is not reducible to the One which signifies the completion, but it is in a process of expansion which does not mean multiplying or adding. Its expansion takes the form of communication with the 'other' or alterity which is neither adding nor subtracting. At the same time, it is affirmative in the sense that it produces the heterogeneous system which is involved with the other (the other which is not constituted as something definite and has no place inside or outside the system).

By comparison, the rhizomic 'system' is similar to Blanchot's concept of communication and proximity which I discussed earlier in this chapter. Gregor's new life in his metamorphosis has certain characteristics that are similar to the rhizome. His numerous little legs around a mindless body suggest an acentered and nonhierarchical system:

> But when, once again, after the same exertion, he lay in his original position, sighing, and again watched his little legs struggling, if possible more fiercely, with each other and saw no way of bringing peace and order into this mindless motion. (6)

His little legs signify the multiplicity of an open system which produces heterogeneity because Gregor cannot bring order and peace into their motion. Kafka, ironically, suggests the rejection of peace and order and rationality of life outside the metamorphosis. Although Gregor always wishes to return to his human past and calls his new life imprisonment, Kafka

[307] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 21.

tries to give a picture of the rhizomic system as an example of an open system. With metamorphosis, Gregor's nature changes and he comes to the verge of totally forgetting his human past because when his sister wants to empty his room in order that he can move freely he likes his room to remain completely as before and not be emptied of furniture. He prefers to find everything unchanged, since he desires his previous life. Kafka wants Gregor to return to his previous life but without having consciousness which organizes memory. Actually, the new life is living in unconscious:

> The rhizome is precisely this production of the unconsciousness.[308]

Though Gregor's body has been transformed his human consciousness remains unchanged. This makes him the undecipherable opaque sign. Unconsciousness is like the open system which is opposite to consciousness with the ability to possess and control itself in order to remain the same. His opaque body can be identified with the rhizomic system. This is the state of living in between which has neither beginning nor end. Gregor is in the middle or on the verge. It should be noted that this betweenness and suspense is productive and always in excess which means it has started from no beginning and never arrives at an end. It reminds us of Blanchot's 'inner space of world,' 'nowhere with no,' which is outside of consciousness as possession. This middle-state is clear in the text when Gregor enjoys hanging from the ceiling:

> He especially liked hanging from the ceiling; it was completely different from lying on the floor; one could breathe more freely; a faint swinging sensation went through the body; and in the almost happy absent-mindedness which Gregor felt up there. (23)

The freedom of absent-mindedness is one effect of this metamorphosis which places Gregor in an almost joyful dying process. This rhizomic middle or the 'inner space of world' which is the freedom of neither life nor death signifies the dying process. Gregor earlier wants to return to human society but now he prefers neither to have the subjectivity of his previous life nor the complete change of metamorphosis. He prefers forgetting instead of remembering.

Gregor's rhizomic middle state which shows the dying process also reminds us of the concept of image and cadaver in Blanchot. Gregor's body as an unconsciousness without

[308] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p. 18.

organizing memory makes him an image without any referent. In other words, he becomes the image of himself, as Blanchot would put it. Gregor's body has been removed from the predicates ascribed to it in the human world. When it becomes nothing the image becomes possible because the image reveals the object in singularity, in its beginning which is becoming and changing. Gregor in the perpetual metamorphosis is the image of himself or, in Blanchot's terms, in communication and proximity. When Gregor's family decides to get rid of him at the end of the text he is sent back to his room and he dies there next morning at three o'clock:

> He remained in this state of empty and peaceful reflection until the tower clock struck three in the morning. (39)

Gregor transforms into nothingness and is empty of any sense of being alive. He has changed to an image of nothing, an image which signifies the becoming and changing of its metamorphosis. He is a cadaver in Bataille's sense - a cadaver being a remainder denoting not only the absence of human being but also the presence of a being in this absence. This presence shows the absence of being and its excess in being. Gregor's sister when she proposes to get rid of him says:

> We have done everything humanly possible to take care of it and to put up with it. (37)

This implies that from the beginning of the text he has been considered as something outside the human life or a dead body. Thus, Gregor's dead body has been a remainder all the time in the text. It has been in excess because he remains in metamorphosis, suspended between his previous and new life. Gregor's death at the end of the text is not the end of his life but it exemplifies the process of always already dying. In Blanchot's term, this state is a kind of 'passivity'. Gregor is in the process of disappearance and appearance, the suspended situation of metamorphosis. Blanchot speaks of 'passivity' as the writing of disaster. For Kafka, *The Metamorphosis* is the writing of this disaster, or what he calls the eternal torment of dying.

Both *The Instant of My Death* and *The Metamorphosis* are illustrations of the impossibility of narrating an event because an event is unpredictable and unforeseeable. An event befalls us without any expectation and its time and place is not clear. It has always already has come and still comes. It is an approach without being near or far. This concept leads Blanchot to define the writer who is in this situation. The writer is in the process of

dying because the self, like the event, is still to come. Thus, the self is in both disappearance and appearance. The narrator in Blanchot and Gregor in Kafka undergo the event which is unpredictable and falls on them suddenly. They enters into the 'process of dying,' the passive state in which the self is still to come. Gregor's metamorphosis and the narrator's lightness of being illustrate this state. Both remain in a state which is neither death nor life.

In these four chapters, I have tried to show how in Kafka and Blanchot language, by naming things in nature, actually gives them to us by distancing them. Hence, Blanchot writes when we say a word:

> we think we still get what it designates […] and even more easily since it is enough to write the word *bread* or the word *angel* to make them immediately available to our imaginations the beauty of the angel and the taste of the bread - yes, but on what condition? That the world, where we have only things to use, first of all collapsed […] language becomes the idle profundity of being, the domain where the word becomes being but does not signify and does not reveal.[309]

In the distance with the real world, then, the word is free to create things because it becomes the thing itself. Unlike the absence of the thing made by the word, language, in Blanchot's view, becomes the neutral space free from the power of the human subject and the word itself; it lets things presents themselves. In presenting themselves, things show their unknown nature which means the entering of the 'other.' In order to develop the idea of the 'other' in writing, Blanchot and Kafka have practiced this notion in their fictions. In this practice, fiction or narrative will not be simply the recounting of an event but the narrative itself creates an event or makes an event happen in the narrative. Indeed, what Blanchot calls the *récit* becomes the empty space that creates the event in the process of becoming**.** In the following chapters**,** I will develop the idea of the 'récit' to argue how writing leaves space for the 'other.'

[309] Maurice Blanchot, *The Book to Come*, trans. by Charlotte Mandel (California: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 207.

Chapter 5

Memory and Récit in Blanchot

Narratology is the name for the study of narrative. In the field of narratology, the main theories come from Russian Formalists, particularly Vladimir Propp and Roman Jakobson, American theories such as Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse*, French structuralist such as Barthes, Todorov, Bremond, and Greimas, and Mieke Bal in Netherlands. Although there is a considerable difference among these theories, and of course each theorist has concepts or categories of his or her own, these theorists agree that:

> the theory of narrative requires a distinction between *story* as a sequence of actions or events, conceived as independent of their manifestation in *discourse* and discourse, the discursive presentation or narration of events.[italics are my emphasis][310]

'Discourse' is the shaping and connective force and carries the power of conviction. The connective force can be the consistency between time and place which makes the narrative organized and convincing. It organizes the 'story' and gives specific meaning to it. In this definition, the 'story' pre-exists the 'discourse' (or narrative). We must distinguish between the story as the content and the discourse as form. As Chatman says:

> Story is the content of the narrative expression, while discourse is the form of that expression.[311]

In terms of this distinction, Chatman uses the term 'signified' to refer to the 'story' and 'signifier' to the 'discourse.' The former is threefold - event, character, and detail of setting - and the latter are those elements that can stand for one of these three.[312] The notion of representation is evident in this distinction: a narrative represents a 'story.' However in what

[310] Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs: Semiotics, Literature, Deconstruction* (London: Routledge, 1981), pp.169-70. This distinction has got different terms for each narratologist. For Mieke Bal's 'narrative text', 'fabula', and 'story', see Mieke Bal's, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative,* trans. by Christine Van Boheemen (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp. 4-8. For Gerard Genette's 'recit', 'historie', see Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), pp. 25-27. For Roland Barthes's 'functions,' 'actions', narration', see Roland Barthes, *A Barthes reader*, ed. by Susan Sontag (London: Jonathan Cape, 1982). For Todorove's 'historie', 'discours', see Tzvetan Todorove, 'Les Ctegories du Recit Litteraire' in Communication, 8, 1966, pp. 125-51. Discussion of this distinction can be found in Shlomith Rimon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction; Contemporary* (New York: Methuen, 1983), pp. 4-10. Abbott H. Porter, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 14-16.

[311] Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), p. 23.

[312] Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, p. 25.

Blanchot calls *récit*, we never find such a distinction. It never recounts any story that pre-exists. The 'story' and the 'discourse' do not shape the fiction but the resistance to this distinction produces the fiction.

There is no English equivalent of the French *récit*, which names a literary genre which tells a single complete event. A few dense notes on what this word means for Blanchot come in his books *The Book to Come*, *The Sirens' Song*, and elsewhere.[313] In the essay, 'The Sirens' Song'(1954), Blanchot explains what he means by event in looking at Ulysses' journeys. The event of the journey is separate from the event of narration. But Blanchot argues that the *récit* does not simply recount an event, whether real or fictional, representing it at a distance, but makes it happen. Kevin Hart puts this point in this way:

> For Blanchot, *récit* means several things: first, it relates just the one unusual event; second, it does not report an event but creates it in the process of narration.[314]

According to Blanchot, Ulysses and Homer are one. Ulysses does not happen outside as a story to be recounted. It is not the product of Homer's imagination. It can be said that nothing happen outside the text. Then, according to Blanchot's account, the event would need the *récit* in order to occur, and the contents of the *récit* would be the event for which they would substitute (for example, the encounter of Ahab with the whale in Melville's *Moby Dick* that Blanchot uses as an illustration). [315] The *récit* allows the event to complete itself, to be brought to form only as its narrative form is unjoined from itself in the sense that the *récit* makes it happen. It might be said it is a kind of non-event that happens as the *récit* and the non-event that spreads everywhere, devours plot, character and the rest, like a black hole that appears at the heart of the book. In this chapter, I will explain that the *récit* is based on destabilizing memory as the cognitive processes whereby past experience is remembered in order to be an origin for narrative. It comes to presence outside time and place instead. The *récit* is founded on a void without time-place dimensions. Blanchot rejects the ability to narrate past events by organizing them into associative chains of meaning and produces the *récit* by putting the narrator in a state between being and non-being in which the narrator is

[313] Maurice Blanchot, 'Siren's Song' in *The Sirens' Song*, trans. by Sacha Rabinovitch (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982); 'Encountering Imaginary' in *The Book to Come*, trans. by Charlotte Mandel (California: Stanford University Press, 2003).
[314] Kevin Hart, *The Dark Gaze* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 63.
[315] For the reading on Blanchot's essay, see Joseph Hillis Miller, *On Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 68-76.

always in the present. This present is not the continuation of the past and never passes to the future. In other words, it is always in the process of becoming without a starting point or ending. Thus, the *récit* involves ideas such as 'the other' and 'becoming' which make the *récit* not haunted by the past - namely recounting only the events in the past. But it creates the event which has not taken place. It creates an exceptional event that does not precede but awaits the récit calls upon it.[316]

Let us take some passages from *The Step Not Beyond* and examine them to explain the recit in terms of what Blanchot means by 'memory.' In this memory, there is no presence or absence in the sense that an event has occurred, then it is recalled later. The past, then, becomes irrevocable. For Blanchot, 'irrevocable:'

> is perhaps the means for the past to warn us (preparing us) that it is empty and that the falling due - the infinite fall, fragile-that it designates, this infinite deep pit into which, if there were any, events fall one by one, signifies only the void of the pit, the depth of what is without bottom.[317]

To explain the irrevocability of events in the empty past, Blanchot situates memory in the 'terrifying ancient:'

> If in the 'terrifying ancient,' nothing was present, and if, having barely produced itself, the event, by the absolute fall, fragile, at once falls into it, as the mark of irrevocability announces to us, it is because the event that we thought we had lived was itself never in a relation of presence to us nor to anything whatsoever.[318]

'The terrifying ancient' implies that the self in this empty past lives in a siteless, limitless, interminably open space. In this space, if any event happens, it does not fall in the past. The present does not pass and does not leave a past behind itself and is not waiting for the future. As Roger Laporte explains, for Blanchot, an event spans the passage of time without being

[316] Ann Smock, *What Is There to Say: Blanchot, Melville, Des Fotéts, Beckett* (Nebraska: The University of Nebraska Press, 2003), p. 122.
[317] Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, p. 13.
[318] Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, p. 15. For more discussion of the 'terrifying ancient,' see Gerald L. Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot: The Refusal of Philosophy* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1887), p. 189.

present.[319] All events that we thought we had lived fall into the state in which they are neither experienced nor unexperienced. The récit does not consider the past as something passed and finished; the past has not still passed. The event vanishes and remains in a forgetfulness in which there is no communication of experience between past and future; the experience spreads in an 'extended present.' This absence of the past perceived as experiencing the past anew is justified in the act of rewriting which has no reference to any former present as passed and is also free from the sequential proceeding of events. Blanchot also speaks of the 'immemorial past,' similar to the 'terrifying ancient,' in *The Writing of the Disaster* to explain the writer's passivity which is:

> the disaster defined not as an event of the past, but as the immemorial past which returns, dispersing by its return the present.[320]

The writer in a state of 'passivity' is in the 'terrifying ancient' where he experiences life outside time-place dimensions; any experience in any time is created anew and the returning of an event means its creation. In this sense, writing or the *récit* is rewriting, or

> repeating what does not take place, will not take place, has not taken place.[321]

This notion of memory implies that human's existence does not come to presence as a closed narratable entity through time-place consistency.[322] Accordingly, events do not participate in succession; they are fragmented and cannot be ordered chronologically. It will be an illusion if we think the past is filled with events which can exist in associative chains of meaning or narrative organization and come to full presence to us. Blanchot writes:

> The past is empty, and only the multiple play of mirroring, the illusion that there would be a present destined to pass and to hold itself in the past, would lead one to believe that the past was filled with events [….] a past thus inhabited, even if by phantoms, would grant the right to live innocently (in the narrative mode, which once, twice, as many times as one can repeat itself, makes

[319] Roger Laporte, 'Maurice Blanchot Today' in *Maurice Blanchot: The Demand of Writing*, ed. by Carolyn Bailey Gill (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 30
[320] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p. 17.
[321] Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, p. 32.
[322] This view is the opposite of what Roland Barthes proposes - namely that narrative is universal and present in every society, age, and culture. See Roland Barthes, Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives' in *Image, Music, Text*, ed. by S. Heath (London: Fontana, 1977).

evocation possible).[323]

If the past has not been experienced completely, it cannot be repeated or to called forth. In this state of the self, nothing can be called back since there is no specific reference to be narrated:

> Irrevocability would be, in this view, the slip or the fragile fall that abolishes time in time, effaces the difference between the near and the far, the marks of reference, the so-called temporal measures and shrouds everything in non-time, from which nothing could come back, less because there is no return than because nothing falls there, except the illusion of falling there.[324]

The act of falling is the removing of existence from place and time. In this sense, the act of recalling loses its meaning in terms of having memory and the past. Memory becomes the place in which neither remembering nor forgetting happens, as if 'memory were of everyone, forgetting of no one.'[325] Recollected events may or may not belong to us. They are of everyone. At the same time, we do not forget them. This implies neither presence nor absence. The récit remembers what it has never known through forgetting.[326] As Blanchot argues, it is the fragility of the human that makes it possible to bring back what has never happened.[327]

In order to clarify this account of memory better, we must explain more of Blanchot's ideas of the past. The act of recounting the event may refer to the futile intellectual attentiveness which is involved in recalling the past, as Proust believes and which he calls *voluntary* memory. Voluntary memory is the memory of intelligence and reason. It gives us only a partial, repetitive, isolated image of the events of our past. Marcel Proust writes in his novel, *In Search of Lost Time*:

> But since the facts which I should then have recalled would have been prompted only by *voluntary memory*, *the memory of the intellect*, and since the pictures

[323] Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, p. 13.
[324] Maurice Blanchot, p. 14.
[325] Maurice Blanchot, p. 10.
[326] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 317.
[327] Maurice Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, trans. by Charlotte Mandell (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 102.

> which that *kind of memory shows us preserve nothing of the past itself*, I should never have had any wish to ponder over this residue of Combray. [italics are my emphasis][328]

Proust is disappointed to have access to his past in Combay by voluntary memory. Walter Benjamin's view of voluntary memory explains the impossibility of access to the past:

> This he [Proust] calls the *memoire volontaire*, and it is its characteristic that the information which it gives about the past retains no trace of it. 'It is the same with our past. In vain we try to conjure it up again; the efforts of our intellect are futile.'[329]

Voluntary memory as the function of intelligence cannot recall the past by the will. What works in the intelligence and reason to recall the past is consciousness that has no trace of the past. In discussing the nature of storytelling, in the essay, 'Storyteller,' Benjamin writes on the word, 'information', which implies the absence of the experience of the past in voluntary memory which is the function of the intelligence or consciousness. In other words, the operation of 'information' and voluntary memory are the same. He distinguishes between 'information' and 'experience of the past:'

> It is no longer intelligence coming from afar, but the information which supplies a handle for what is nearest that gets the readiest hearing. The intelligence that came from afar - whether the spatial kind from foreign countries or the temporal kind of tradition - possessed an authority which gave it validity, even when it was not subject to verification. Information, however, lays claim to prompt verifiability. The prime requirement is that it appears 'understandable in itself.' Often it is no more exact than the intelligence of earlier centuries was. But while the latter inclined to borrow from the miraculous, it is indispensable for information to sound plausible. Because of this it proves incompatible with the spirit of storytelling. If the art of storytelling has become rare, the dissemination of information has had a decisive share in this state of affairs.[330]

[328] Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, trans. by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, Vol. I (New York: Modern Library, 1992), p. 59.
[329] Walter Benjamin, 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire' in *Charles Baudelaire, A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Verso, 1997), p. 112.

The 'information' which intelligence gives is already verified because information is the product of intelligence, which has control of everything by will. Intelligence receives nothing from the past. It is 'understandable in itself' in the sense that it is discrete from the 'past experience' and has no need to be supported by it:

> If it were the intention of the press to have the reader assimilate the information it supplies as part of his own experience, it would not achieve its purpose. But its intention is just the opposite, and it is achieved: to isolate what happens from the realm in which it could affect the experience of the reader.[331]

The events in any piece of information which has no relation with the 'experience in the past' are forced to be connected in a specified meaning by voluntary memory. It implies that there is a lack of connection between pieces of information. Benjamin calls this kind of collecting of information the decay of the work's aura, i.e., the loss of immediacy and authenticity.[332]

The art of storytelling is in contrast with 'information' since it is rooted in the 'experience of the past.' It is implied that voluntary memory or 'information' does not work in the telling story. Unlike 'information' that tries to force connection on the reader, the art of storytelling leaves it to the reader to interpret it. The 'experience of the past' cannot be recounted in only one particular meaningful association:

> The most extraordinary things, marvellous things, are related with greatest accuracy, but the psychological connection of the events is not forced on the reader. It is left up to him to interpret things the way he understands them, and thus the narrative achieves an amplitude that information lacks.[333]

Storytelling gives an immediate experience of the past by virtue of the singularity that is created in every telling. Interpretation, in Benjamin's view, does not mean the applying of subjectivity. Voluntary memory tries to impose subjectivity whereas storytelling requires the

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[330]Walter Benjamin, 'Storyteller' in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Fontana Press, 1973), p. 88.
[331] Walter Benjamin, 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire' in *Charles Baudelaire, A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. by Harry Zohn, p. 112.
[332] Walter Benjamin, 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' in *Illuminations*. For further reading on the auratic art, see Jennifer Todd, 'Production, Reception, Criticism: Walter Benjamin and the Problem of Meaning in Art' in *Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).
[333] Walter Benjamin, 'Storyteller' in *Illuminations*, p. 89.

singularity of every reading which builds the 'afterlife' of any story. By means of this distinction, Benjamin rejects the voluntary memory's function in the art of the storytelling because it cannot recover an authentic experience of past. This is implied by the word 'amplitude' which 'information' lacks. This storytelling which creates difference in every telling gives way to 'the oppressed tradition.'[334] This 'tradition' is the collective past that is combined with the individual's past, the space of remembering and forgetting or the past of everyone and no one, in which the dialectic correspondence between the present instant and a moment from the past occurs.[335] Storytelling introduces this 'tradition' in which storyteller does not tell story by voluntary memory:

> Where there is experience in the strict sense of the word, certain contents of the individual past are combined with material of the collective past.[336]

If we translate this notion into Blanchot's language, we will see that Blanchot believes that the act of recalling loses its meaning in terms of having a memory which means the past experience has passed and include its events continuously. The 'collective past' is not the past that has been experienced and finished. Memory becomes the space between forgetting and remembering in the sense that it cannot recall what has happened in complete form.[337] This implies neither presence nor absence. Rejecting voluntary memory in Proust, Benjamin believes in this forgetting:

> Is not the involuntary recollection much closer to forgetting than what is usually called memory?[338]

Blanchot's notion of the absence of the past may refer to *involuntary* memory. For Proust, what really gives access to our past is our involuntary memory, namely a sudden emergence of a vivid moment from our past that happens 'by chance' when our senses meet a stimulus (an object, a taste, a sound...) already experienced in the past. As Benjamin writes:

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[334] For Benjamin, the oppressed tradition is 'tradition as the discontinuity of the past in opposition to history as the continuity of events.' See Andrew E. Benjamin 'Boredom and Distraction: The Moods of Modernity' in *Walter Benjamin and History*, ed. by Andrew E. Benjamin (London: Continuum, 2005), p. 152.
[335] Andrew E. Benjamin 'Boredom and Distraction: The Moods of Modernity' in *Walter Benjamin and History*, p. 152.
[336] Walter Benjamin, 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire' in *Charles Baudelaire, A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, p. 113.
[337] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation,* p. 317.
[338] Walter Benjamin,'On the Image of Proust' in *Selected Writings*, trans. by Rodney Livingston and Others, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, Vol. II (Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 238.

> Therefore Proust, summing up, says that the past is 'somewhere beyond the reach of the intellect, and unmistakably present in some material object (or in the sensation which such an object arouses in us), though we have no idea which one it is. As for that object, it depends entirely on chance whether we come upon it before we die or whether we never encounter it.'[339]

In terms of narrative, these sentences suggest that an individual cannot form an image of himself or he cannot seize hold of his experience. Proust's work, *In Search of Lost Time,* suggests that an individual is isolated in many ways and yet cannot recollect its isolated self. According to Benjamin, the reason is that:

> man's inner concerns do not have their issueless private character by nature. They do so only when he is increasingly unable to assimilate the data of the world around him by way of experience.[340]

In this view, the self does not come into a fixed identity. For this chaotic self, the past as the place for the voluntary memory is impossible to be recollected. Thus, recollection of the scattered self is impossible. The assimilation of the 'other' into the self is the attempt to form an identity. Proust shows the impossibility of the act of self-consciousness and possession of the self:

> One is more distressed at having become another person, after a lapse of years and in the natural sequence of time, than one is at any given moment by the fact of being, one after another, the incompatible persons, malicious, sensitive refined, caddish, disinterested, ambitious which one can be, in turn, every day of one's life. And the reason why one is not distressed is the same, namely that the self which has been eclipsed-momentarily in this latter case and when it is a question of character, permanently in the former case and when the passions are involved-is not there to deplore the other, the other which is for the moment, or from then onwards, one's whole self; the caddish self laughs at his caddishness because one is the cad, and the forgetful self does not grieve about his forgetfulness precisely because one has forgotten.[341]

[339] Walter Benjamin, 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire' in *Charles Baudelaire, A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, p. 112.
[340] Walter Benjamin, p. 112.

Proust's narrator discusses the multiplicity of the selves which are in one person and also forgetfulness. The replacement of the whole self by the 'other' results in a state of being in which there is neither presence nor absence but the process of 'becoming.' In this state, memory is the place of disintegration; it is not able to retrieve the past as it was. In other words, involuntary memory is an illustration of this fragmentation of self for Proust. It insists on one instant not on unifying some instants. Ramon Fernandez, one of Proust's early critics, comments that Proust takes up an impression but he does not keep it. Indeed, his impression, as it filters through his consciousness, is not refined or reduced to essentials so as to form a body of tendencies orientated in a certain direction. Instead of representing his experience by simplifying it, his impression projects his self outside him.[342] This is to dissolve one's self in the experience, set it according to the fact of time and space where it occurred and consequently cut it up into pieces.

Benjamin writes about the problematic nature of recollection by referring to the act of collecting:

> Right from the start, the great collector is struck by the confusion, by the scatter, in which the things of the world are found. In particular, the world image of the allegorist cannot be explained apart from the passionate, distraught concern with this spectacle. The allegorist is, as it were, the polar opposite of the collector. He has given up the attempt to elucidate things through research into their properties and relations. He dislodges things from their context and, from the outset, relies on his profundity to illuminate their meaning. The collector, by contrast, brings together what belongs together; by keeping in mind their affinities and their succession in time, he can eventually furnish information about his objects. Nevertheless in every collector hides an allegorist, and in every allegorist a collector. As far as a collector is concerned, his collection is never complete; for let him discover just a single piece missing, and everything he's collected remains a patchwork, which is what things are for allegory from the beginning. On the other hand, the allegorist - for whom objects represent only keywords in a secret dictionary, which make known their meanings to the initiated - precisely the allegorist can never have enough of things. With him, one thing is so little

[341] Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*, trans. by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin, Vol. III (New York: Modern Library, 1992), p. 657.
[342] Ramon Fernandez, 'La Garantie des Sentiments et les Intermittences du Coeure' in *Marcel Proust*, ed. by Leighton Hodson (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 346.

> capable of taking place of another that no possible reflection suffices to foresee what meaning his profundity might lay claim to for each one of them.[343]

The collector and the allegorist are similar in the sense that they order things together based on what they mean for them not for anybody else. The principle by which they gather things is just meaningful for them; it could be the matter of voluntary memory. At the same time, their collection is always incomplete and does not have a unified meaning. The difference is that for the collector the ordering is arbitrarily fixed but the allegorist constellates things to show that any collection remains fragmentary, since a thing cannot be known through its place in a collection. If the collector includes some things in a collection to know them, they remain unknown. It is because they are known based on the relation which is established among them. In other words, we acquire knowledge of their relationship rather than the knowledge of things in themselves. In this sense, things cannot be known in a collection or individually unless the allegorist constellates them to show how things reveal their unknown nature endlessly in an endless variety of collecting. This work of the allegorist can illustrate involuntary memory as something which recollects the past incompletely. It also signifies that Proust has created the past through involuntary recollection. In other words, by recalling memory, we cannot see the past as it was. According to Benjamin, Proust:

> describes not a life as it actually was, but a life as it was remembered by the one who had lived it. The important thing is not what he experienced, but the weaving of his memory.[344]

The weaving of the memory is the recollection of the past which is never complete and unified. Like the work of allegorist, this recollection is fragmentary, since the past can be constructed endlessly. Benjamin believes that allegory as the power of destruction works in the system of thought:

> Allegory declares itself to be beyond beauty. Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things. [345]

[343] Walter Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin: The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin Mclaughlin (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 211. For further discussion of allegory in Benjamin, see Jeremy Tambling, *Allegory and the Work of Melancholy: the Late Medieval and Shakespeare* (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2004), p. 121. For allegory in Benjamin, see Jeremy Tambling, *Allegory* (London: Routledge, 2010).

[344] Walter Benjamin'On the Image of Proust' in *Selected Writings*, trans. by Rodney Livingston and Others, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, Vol. II (Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 237-38.

Benjamin uses the simile of the ruins of things to show that thought is the place of ruin and destruction, the break between things and the contemplative mind.[346] Thought is not complete and total; it is an accumulation of fragments. Allegory ends conceiving thought as something self-consistent and knowing itself. Allegory is beyond beauty which means unification and totality because it makes visible ruin, and fragments. This concept of allegory manifests the ruin of self which can be implied in memory. Proust's involuntary memory signifies this concept of allegory which functions in memory.

Blanchot's view of memory is in line with Proust's involuntary memory. The voluntary memory is disqualified by Blanchot because the problem is the matter of presence in the sense that there has been no present in the past. The past is empty because the self is in a bottomless void without any time-place dimension. In this state, nothing falls into the past because there is no past, present and the future. Proust's involuntary memory introduces us to this state. The weaving of memory implies the absence of any consistency between time and place which is the same as the void in Blanchot. Proust weaves the past as he remembers it. This similarity of Proust to Blanchot is highlighted when Benjamin writes on Proust:

> An experienced event is finite - at any rate, confined to one sphere of experience; a remembered event is infinite, because it is merely a key to everything that has happened before it and after it.[347]

An infinite event implies event in the notion of the void in Blanchot, an event that is outside time and place. The infinite event can act as a connector of events in a narrative which is constructed by the one who wants to recollect the past. It also breaks the order of events and acts as a kind of anti-narrative. It is implied that all events are infinite in the sense that they make different arrangements of events possible. Benjamin in writing on Hölderlin's concept of 'caesura' introduces the category of the 'expressionless.' It is through caesura in which, along with harmony, every expression simultaneously comes to a standstill in order to give reign to an expressionless power inside all artistic media.[348] The 'caesura' acts the same as the 'infinite event.' Both allow what has been excluded to present itself. For Blanchot, this presentation means that neither absence nor presence exists there:

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[345] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. by John Osborn (London: Verso, 2003), p. 178.
[346] Jeremy Tambling, *Allegory* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 114.
[347] Walter Benjamin,'On the Image of Proust' in *Selected Writings*, Vol. II, p. 238.
[348] Walter Benjamin, 'Goethe's Elective Affinities', pp. 340-1.

> What will come again? Everything, save the present, the possibility of a presence.[349]

The neither/nor state of memory means that memory belongs to everybody and nobody including the void past. Such memory is impossible to be recalled in the category of presence/absence:

> But what was his part, what did he get outside of his role, which was, moreover, interchangeable, in exchanges that were never imposed on him except in his being haunted by memories over which he had so little control that he began to believe that they did not belong to him, memory of nobody, rather? He remembered, no doubt, memory so ancient of a Thing that could not be called present, nor to come.[350]

In this extract, two persons have an interchangeable relation to each other. One of these two can be the other one at the same time because their past and their memory are interchangeable. Memory becomes of everybody and nobody.[351] This reminds us of Benjamin's notion of 'constellation' and the work of allegorist. The 'constellation,' for allegorist, is the assemblage of isolated fragments without possibility of totality. Here, we can think of memory as a 'constellation' of events rather than mere collection. It is by the 'constellation' of events that we can interchange memories of different individuals. In a 'constellation,' it is impossible to find an origin, since it is the assemblage of isolated fragments. Blanchot calls origin 'Thing' which signifies that it could not be recalled and reached. The 'Thing's being ancient implies that it is so ancient that could not be placed in the past. When we say present, we split between the present and the past, but the ancient past is the step (not) beyond; it brings us face to face with the ignorance of the unknown so that we forget endlessly.[352] Therefore, memory is bottomless and nothing but a void:

> They remembered, but what they remembered was always less ancient than

[349] Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, p. 16.
[350] Maurice Blanchot, p. 78. These sentences have been written in italic. Many pages in this book are in italic which signifies they are part of the récit. Blanchot puts italic and non-italic together to remove the boundary between theory and fiction.
[351] Maurice Blanchot, p. 10.
[352] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p. 3.

their memory.[353]

That the 'Thing' signifies the bottomlessness of memory or the void past leads to the notion of the Neuter that Blanchot relates to the 'Thing:'

> The thing, like the he/it, like the neuter or the outside, indicates a plurality characterized by singularizing itself and by appearing, by default, to rest in the indeterminate. That the Thing has a relation to the Neuter: outrages and finally inadmissible supposition, in so far as the neuter cannot arrest itself in a subject noun, even this be collective, having also this movement of diverting anything to which it would apply itself from its momentaneous essence.[354]

Blanchot defines memory and past as the 'Thing' which is in the neutral state that is indeterminate. In approaching the 'Thing,' we find it singular in its plurality because the 'Thing' has no stable essence to be defined or located. In this state, every time that we weave memory it is singular because new weaving can be created as singular endlessly. The 'Thing' in the Neuter also signifies self in indeterminate identity. It also implies a genderless state, the he/it. The 'Thing' becomes the 'other' that always remains the other and is never subsumed into totality and completeness. The 'other' of the neuter state of the 'Thing' is neither one nor the other. No binary relationship but a plurality to the point of indeterminacy characterizes this state:

> The neuter takes the other back into itself under a light (but impenetrable) veil that seems only to force out of the other its incessant affirmation that a negative allows to grasp: the other of the other, the unknown of the other than the one, and its refusal to be only the Other or the 'the other than'.[355]

The neuter is neither illuminating nor obscuring because of the other in the 'Thing.' It is affirmation and negation at the same time. Memory in this neutral state is neither one nor the other, neither presence nor absence, since it never arrives at completion. This also reminds us of that the web that Proust creates in his novel manifests the chaotic self. This also reminds us of the elimination of the distinction between individual past and collective past which Benjamin sees in Proust:

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[353] Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, p. 80.
[354] Maurice Blanchot, p. 73.
[355] Maurice Blanchot, pp. 74-75.

> Where there is experience in the strict sense of the word, certain contents of the individual past combines with material of the collective past.[356]

According to Benjamin, who compares Freud's concept of memory with Proust's concept, for Proust,

> only what has not been experienced explicitly and consciously, what has not happened to the subject as an experience, can become a component of the *memoire involontaire*.[357]

Benjamin explains in Freudian terms that memory is the place of unconsciousness and that it fragments form. When an event leaves behind memory-traces and never enters consciousness it becomes the involuntary memory that has not been experienced explicitly and consciously. Freud localizes consciousness on the borderline between the external world and internal mental processes in which the perceptions of excitation in the form of a stimulus coming from the external world happen. According to him, in consciousness,

> the excitatory process leaves no permanent trace behind; but […] the excitation is transmitted to the systems lying next within and […] it is in *them* that its traces are left.[358]

Freud claims that memory is founded not in consciousness but in other systems and memory-traces are left in these other systems:

> We assume that all excitatory processes that occur in the *other* systems leave permanent traces behind in them which form the foundation of memory. Such memory-traces, then, have nothing to do with the fact of becoming conscious; indeed they are often most powerful and most enduring when the process which left them behind was one which never entered consciousness.[359]

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[356] Walter Benjamin, 'Some Motifs in Baudelaire' in *Charles Baudelaire, A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, p. 113.
[357] Walter Benjamin, p. 114. Benjamin also speaks of this concept of memory in 'On the Image of Proust' in Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*.
[358] Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' in *The Standard Edition of the Completed Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans under the editorship of James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alex Strachey and Alan Tyson, Volume XVIII (London: Hogarth, 2001), p. 25.
[359] Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' in *The Standard Edition of the Completed Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XVIII, p. 25.

Freud assumes that consciousness and memory are not within the same system, and that memory is formed not in the consciousness system but in the *other* systems. This memory may never come to consciousness. Freud speaks of these two different systems:

> We possess a system *Pcpt.-Cs*, which receives perceptions but retains no permenanet trace of them, so that it can react like a clean sheet to every new perception; while the permanent traces of the excitations which have been received are preserved in a 'mnemic system' lying behind the perceptual system. Later, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), I added a remark to the effect that the inexplicable phenomenon of consciousness arises in the perceptual system *instead* of the permanent traces.[360]

Two systems are in one single apparatus: consciousness and unconsciousness. The first one leaves no trace of the excitations and the second one keeps the excitations permanently. Freud describes this perceptual apparatus by means of the Mystic Pad. According to Freud, the Mystic Pad consists of two layers: wax slab and wax paper. The wax paper is situated over the wax slab. The wax paper receives perceptions in an operation like writing on a paper. When something is written on the wax paper it is pressed on the wax slab. The grooves produced on the wax slab are visible as dark writing. If something new is going to be written, the wax paper should be raised from the wax slab. Then, the mystic Pad is now clear of writing:

> If one whishes to destroy what has been written, all that is necessary is to raise the double covering-sheet from the wax slab by a light pull. The close contact between the wax paper and the wax slab at the places which have been scratched is thus brought to an end and it recurs when the two surfaces come together once more. The Mystic Pad is now clear of writing and ready to receive fresh inscription.[361]

Freud considers the wax slab to be like unconsciousness. What is written on the wax slab is kept permanently but it is as if it vanishes and the wax slab is blank to be to be written on:

> On the Mystic Pad the writing vanishes every time the close contact is

[360] Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' in *The Standard Edition of the Completed Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XIX, p. 228.
[361] Sigmund Freud, pp. 228-29.

> broken between the paper which receives the stimulus and the wax slab which preserves the impression.[362]

The point is that the memory-trace in the unconscious is kept permanently and never erased and at the same time the unconscious is clear to be inscribed endlessly. Derrida says that, according to Freud, the layer which receives the stimuli-the system *Pcpt-Cs* or wax paper-forms no permanent traces and the foundation of memory come about in other, supplementary, systems. In this view:

> Writing supplements perception before perception even appears to itself [is conscious of itself]. 'Memory' or writing is the opening of that process of appearance.[363]

The unconscious is a supplement for the consciousness that cannot form a permanence trace of perception. The unconscious becomes writing as a trace of perception in consciousness. This trace is not a real perception but a trace of an origin. In this sense, the unconscious, like writing, tries to represent an origin. The trace is trace if it can be erased because it is not the origin but the trace of the origin. Therefore, if it cannot be erased, it is considered as the origin, as presence. The trace is absence of the origin. Derrida argues that the trace, in Freud's view, is inerasable:

> This erasure is death itself, and it is within its horizon that we must conceive not only the 'present,' but also what Freud doubtless believed to be the indelibility of certain traces in the unconsciousness, where 'nothing ends, nothing happens, nothing is forgotten.'[364]

Nothing is forgotten because the trace is kept in the unconscious and this implies full presence. According to Derrida, Freud's thought is entangled with presence and is still in the realm of metaphysics because he considers the trace as origin and tries to give it space and time in the form of writing. When everything is kept permanently in the unconscious and is irradicable it is the origin that tries to be represented. For Derrida, Freud seeks after the permanent selfhood in keeping trace as presence:

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[362] Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' in *The Standard Edition of the Completed Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XIX, p. 231.
[363] Jacques Derrida, 'Freud and the Scene of Writing' in *Writing and Difference*, trans. by Alan Bass (Routledge: London, 1978), p. 282.
[364] Jacques Derrida, p. 289.

> The trace is the erasure of selfhood, of one's own presence, and is constituted by the threat or anguish of its irremediable disappearance, of the disappearance of its disappearance. An unerasable trace is not a trace, it is a full presence, an immobile and uncorruptible substance, a son of God, a sign of parousia and not a seed, that is a mortal germ.[365]

Blanchot's account of memory as empty because there has been no present for events in the past is beyond the Freudian concept of memory. Proust is also beyond Freudian memory. Benjamin explains Proust in Freudian terms that memory is the place of unconsciousness and it is fragmentary. When an event leaves behind memory-traces and never enters consciousness it becomes an involuntary memory that has not been experienced explicitly and consciously. However, Proust, like Blanchot, never gives presence to memory in the sense that they bring the same traces from memory to the narrative. In every act of recalling, something different comes out. Blanchot and Proust by introducing the 'other' in memory make it trace that is erased. In this state, the border between self and its outside is removed. Hence, the presentation of memory-trace becomes impossible. Blanchot, Proust, and Freud are saying the same but in different languages in the sense that memory and the past are in the place which is called *other* systems,[366] in Freud, involuntary memory in Proust, and memory in Blanchot. For these thinkers, we have no control of memory and the past. However, Blanchot and Proust go beyond Freud in the sense that memory and the past is neither present nor absent and never comes to presence because the 'other' is always already in memory and makes the act of forgetting happen. Freud insists on giving presence to memory and the past by constructing them in narrative form because traces can be recalled just as they are in the unconscious:

> And, in fact, Freud never stopped proposing codes, rules of great generality. And the substitution of signifiers seems to be the essential activity of psychoanalytic interpretation.[367]

Freud is in the realm of selfhood where traces are inerasable in memory for him but Blanchot and Proust by introducing the 'other' raise the trace and never give it presentation. The presence of the 'other' means erasure of presence and absence. This erasure does not mean to

[365] Jacques Derrida, 'Freud and the Scene of Writing' in *Writing and Difference*, p. 289.
[366] Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' in *The Standard Edition of the Completed Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XVIII, p. 25.
[367] Jacques Derrida, 'Freud and the Scene of Writing' in *Writing and Difference*, p. 264.

clear memory of the past but it implies the erasure of selfhood. Selfhood implies the idea of the same whereas Blanchot's concept of self is opposite and signifies undoing the self.

This view of memory and self leads Blanchot to think of a state for self where there is no past or present or future in it: we are out of time-place dimensions. The distance of man (generally human being) from self suggested by this sentence:

> Enter/ between/neuter/not being[368]

This sentence implies the destabilizing of memory, past, present, and future and going outside of them. In this state, self does not recount the past, the present and future but places itself outside:

> For art is linked, precisely as Kafka is, to what is 'outside' the world, and it expresses the profundity of this outside bereft of intimacy and repose - this outside which appears when even with ourselves, even with our death, we no longer have relations of possibility.[369]

This situation describes the situation of the one who has lost himself, who can no longer say 'I', who has lost the world. The 'I' has no relation of presence with himself. The 'outside' is a space that the artist moves toward in order to be out of memory and time-place dimension. So, if Blanchot writes his *récit*, he does not recount the past, but he repeats the unpresentability of the presence. We say un-presentability because presence does not exist before to be re-presented (presented again). Presence is presented in its first coming to presence. And because it cannot be presented, it comes to presence differently in every repetition.

When the past is empty and the self is in the state between being and non-being, the self is submitted to a new law which is called the law of Eternal Return. As Blanchot writes,

> the law of Eternal Return left no choice but to live the future in the past, the past in the future, without, however, the past and the future being summoned to change places.[370]

[368] Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, p. 69.
[369] Maurice Blanchot,*The Space of Literature*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1982), p. 75.

He speaks of the law of the Eternal Return in which a self who possesses single identity and considered as the 'Same' returns to past. In this return, the time and the presence are effaced and the self finds its existence in an uncompleted completion of time, in the middle of the circle of past and future without the present time. The Same is placed in parentheses as the number 0 between the impotent past and future as 0. The self in its circular catastrophic return from past to future and then to his zero place effaces itself. Indeed, the law of the Eternal Return is to wipe out the self through forgetting as the sudden transformation of identity, eternal becoming and absorption of all identities in being.[371] It seems that we are outside memory in this return, in a state of being and non-being in which we perform the return endlessly. The main consequence is the raising of multiplicity in the past by the future which invites the unknown or 'the other' and 'alterity' into the past. [372] This makes the law of Eternal recurrence of the different not the Same. This also is the result of circularity from the past to the present to the future and back to the past.[373] This makes a unity in which the other and alterity is introduced. This also implies introducing difference in the repetition of the return,

> difference held by the very repetition whose possibility escapes, being given over to the difference that has necessarily always already repeated itself, even though it will always repeat itself.[374]

The example of this situation is the narrator in one of Blanchot's *récit*, *Death Sentence* (1948), who endorses plurality by commenting on the situation of man in the world:

> The shadow of yesterday's world is still present for people who take refuge in it, but it will fade. And the world of the future is already falling in avalanche on

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[370] Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, p. 14.

[371] Pierre Klossowiski, *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, trans. by Daniel W. Smith (London, New York: Continuum, 2005), p. 44.

[372] In OED, 'alterity' is defined as: the state of being other or different; diversity, 'otherness.' a. Fr. *altérité*, ad. med. L. *alteritāt-em* a being otherwise, f. *alter* other.

[373] Delauze argues that if a living present, in philosophical language, is exposed to 'discontinuous matter' or 'sensibility,' then it contracts the successive instants of encountering with 'the discontinuous matter.' This is called imagination. Memory appropriates the imagination or, in psychological language, a local ego is formed. In the third stage, thought tries to unify imagination and memory to form an 'I.' For this purpose, thought turns itself away from these two object and in the narcissistic moment becomes an ego that is called 'caesura.' This 'caesura' divides the self into the order of before, during and after and tries to unify the self. But this possibility collapses. In this disintegration of the self, the eternal return appears which smashes the self into pieces. See Joe Hughes, *Deleuze's Difference and Repetition* (London: Continuum, 2009).

[374] Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, p. 57.

the memory of the past.[375]

The past as a fixed entity will disappear and the future as non-finality, unpredictability, and difference is introduced into the past. Thus, empty memory and the state between being and non-being that brings about the law of Eternal Return impossibilies telling a story. This is also the subject of Blanchot's *Madness of the Day* (1949). The narrator in this *récit* is brought in front of the police and doctors who are representative of the law. He is asked by the law to recount what has happened to him but he cannot recount. Representatives want the *récit* from the narrator. He begins to tell the *récit* but from the very beginning, the *récit* is over because he has lost the sense of the story. This scene happens in the final paragraphs of the text which repeats the very first lines of the text. In this sense, narration is impossible because the narrator needs time and place to narrate something but the narrator in the *récit* lives in an always-already present time in which there is no time-space dimension. Indeed, the narrator is in the state between being and non-being which makes it impossible for him to tell a story.

According to narratology, any narrative has representation at the heart, representing either something from the past or from the present. Therefore, narrative is inseparable from representation. An event from the past is recounted or repeated or represented by the organizing power of the discourse. An event in the past is considered as the origin to be represented in the narrative. But, as have just seen, in Blanchot's view memory is an empty space in the sense that the occurrence of events linger from the past to the present and continues in future. An event does not begin and end in a specific period of time. We can think of an 'extended present.' In this 'extended present' which spreads everywhere and every time, the recounting of the past in narrative mode is impossible. This view of memory situates the self in a neutral timeless and siteless state in which it is subject to the law of Eternal Return. If we think of the *récit* in this sense, we can say that the *récit* shows the problematic nature of memory of a story-teller when s/he recounts the past, since we can neither put the organizing power of narration on events nor recall past events as they are. Moreover, according to the notion of 'extended present,' the *récit* does not recount an event that comes from memory to be repeated. The *récit* does not recount an event outside itself. It is the *récit* that produces the event and makes it happen.

[375] Maurice Blanchot, *Death Sentence*, trans. by Lydia Davis (Barytown New York: Station Hill, 1978), p. 46.

Chapter 6

The primal Scene and Récit in Blanchot

In the last chapter, I tried to explain the notion of memory in Blanchot's meaning to develop the *récit*. Blanchot introduces the *récit* as an independent entity in the sense that it does not represents events which have taken place but events which take place in the *récit*. To clarify this point, we can say the *récit* happens outside memory completely, in the sense that memory is no longer perceived as the place of past experience and the time of the past but is a void and empty space. The emptiness of the past signifies that time-place dimensions do not exist because what is called the present does not pass and we are always in this present in which there is neither presence nor absence:

> Let there be a past, let there be a future, with nothing that would allow the passage from one to the other.[376]

In this sense, the present is not left in the past and never passes into the future. To put this a different way, we are under the illusion of having a past which included events determined in terms of time and place. The present is dispersed in the past and the future and makes neither presence nor absence possible. This implies the formation of being that passes from past to present and goes into the future. Being does not come to presence. Therefore, it is an illusion that the past is filled with events that can exist in an associative chains of meaning or narrative organization**.**

The Primal Scene

Having given a summary of the last chapter, we can push further the notion of the *récit* in this chapter. In *The Writing of the Disaster,* one argument that Blanchot makes concerning the absence of foundation in the memory and the state between being and non-being is the 'primal scene.' It actually shows the *récit* as the unpresentability of presence. The 'primal scene' is not the first as origin. Blanchot, in a fragment, writes about the 'primal scene' that precedes the formation of the first person, the 'I' confident in his or her powers, who is capable of remembering and forgetting. Therefore, Blanchot's 'primal scene' rejects the idea of a single substantial 'I'.

[376] Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond,* trans. by Lycette Nelso (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 12.

It should be mentioned that this 'primal scene' points us to the Freudian 'primal scene'. Freud in the Wolf-Man case refers to a dream that a patient had when he was three, four, or at most five years old. Sergei Konstantinovitch Pankejeff was a Russian aristocrat from Odessa whom Freud gave the pseudonym of Wolf Man (*der Wolfsmann*) to protect his identity, after a dream Pankejeff had of a tree full of white wolves.[377] In that dream, it was night and he was lying in bed when suddenly the window opened of its own accord and he saw some white wolves sitting on the big walnut tree in front of the window. The Wolf-man traces his dream back to a story related by his grandfather in which a wolf leaps through a window and surprises a tailor. The Wolf-man does not remain with this connection and thinks that his eyes are open. He was asleep, therefore, and suddenly woke up, and as he woke he saw something: the tree with the wolves. This makes Freud conclude that it was a real occurrence and hypothesize that the Wolf- Man had been sleeping in his cot in his parents' bedroom and woke up in the afternoon perhaps because of his rising fever. Freud supposes that the Wolf-man's parents had retired, half undressed, for an afternoon nap. When he woke up, he witnessed the coitus of his parents. This is considered the 'primal scene' for Freud. The Wolf-Man recollects his grandfather's story as the source of his dream but is not sure. For this reason, Freud says:

> These scenes from infancy are not reproduced during the treatment as recollection, they are the products of construction.[378]

Ned Lukacher in his book, *Primal Scenes* argues that Freud makes it clear from the outset that the construction of the 'primal scene' is a supposition and quotes from Freud:

> If it was to be assumed that behind the content of the dream there lay some such unknown scene - one, that is, which had already been forgotten at the time of the dream - then it must have taken place very early.[379]

According to Lukacher, the 'primal scene' is one that is always unknown and forgotten. The dream as a narrative is translated into another narrative (of the 'primal scene'). Both Freud

[377]For the memoir of the Wolf-Man, see Muriele Gardiner, *The Wolf-Man and Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1972).
[378] Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Completed Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* trans under the editorship of James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alex Strachey and Alan Tyson, Volume XVII (London: Hogarth, 2001), p. 51.
[379] Ned Lukacher, *Primal Scenes: Literature, Philosophy, Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 27.

and the Wolf-Man are undecided about this 'primal scene'. In terms of this construction of the 'primal scene', Peter Brooks argues that, for Freud, it is like narrative theory. Brooks uses the widely known terms of Russian narratological theory.[380] Brook distinguishes the *fabula* or story that is the event of the patient's neurosis from the *sjuzet* or plot that is Freud's reworking of it:

> The relation between fabula and sjuzet, between event and its significant reworking, is one of suspicion and conjecture, a structure of indeterminacy which can offer only a framework of narrative possibilities rather than a clearly specifiable plot.[381]

Brooks applies the distinction in order to demonstrate how Freud undermines it. He recalls how Freud says it is impossible to provide a clear picture of the origin and the development of the patient's illness.

Blanchot advances his own version of the 'primal scene' and by putting a question mark after the title (a 'primal scene'?) suspends Freud hypothesis. It seems that Blanchot, against Lukacher and Brooks, believes that Freud hopes to arrive at a 'primal scene'. Blanchot argues that there are interminable 'primal scenes' which we cannot locate of which one is primal:

> (a primal scene?) *You who live later, close to a heart that beats no more, suppose this: the child - is he seven years old, or eight perhaps?- standing by the window, drawing the curtain and through the pane, looking. What he sees: the garden, the wintry trees, the wall of a house. Though he sees, no doubt in a child's way, his play space, he grows weary and slowly looks up toward the ordinary sky, with clouds, grey light - pallid daylight without depth. What happens then: the sky, the same sky, suddenly open, absolutely black and absolutely empty, revealing (as though the pane had broken) such an absence that all has since always and forevermore been lost therein - so lost that therein is affirmed and dissolved the vertiginous knowledge that nothing is what there is, and first of all nothing beyond. The unexpected aspect of this scene, its interminable feature, is the feeling of happiness*

[380] For further discussion of Russian naratology, see Tony Bennett, *Formalism and Marxism* (London: Routlegde, 2003).
[381] Peter Brooks, 'Fictions of the Wolf Man: Freud and Narrative Understanding' in *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intervention in Narrative* (New York: Knopf, 1984), p. 275.

> *that straightaway submerges the child, the ravaging joy to which he can bear witness only by tears, an endless flow of tears. He is thought to suffer a childish sorrow; attempts are made to console him. He says nothing. He will live henceforth in the secret. He will weep no more.*[382]

The scene where the child witnesses his parents is not primal for Blanchot. In Blanchot's version, the child is opened to another scene, a sky which reveals nothing prior for the child. It is empty in terms of referring to an origin. This opening continues repeatedly because Blanchot says it is 'interminable.' In this sense, the scene has no absolute primacy, and is preceded by another prior scene, and that prior scene is animated by a prior one endlessly. Blanchot speaks of this point that the primary event is the matter of going back to a beginning again. It is a beginning since it is singular and unique for each person. But 'it is not a beginning inasmuch as each scene is always ready to open onto a prior scene.'[383] Each prior scene opens onto yet another prior scene because each person comes to a set of differing and deferring relations:

> There would be only one modality, or a double modality functioning in such a way that identity, differed/deferred, would regulate difference.[384]

This point is what Lukacher calls deferred reaction in Freud. According to Lukacher, deferred reaction (*Nachtraglichkeit*) is the randomness of a latter event that triggers the memory of an earlier event or image, which might never have come to consciousness if the latter event had never occurred.[385] Freud writes about the construction of the 'primal scene':

> The effects of the scene were deferred, but meanwhile it had lost none of its freshness in the interval between the ages of one and a half and four years.[386]

The relation between earlier event and latter event is not one of linear causality. While the earlier event is still to some extent the cause of the latter event, the earlier event is nevertheless also the effect of the latter event. We are confronted with causes that are also

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[382] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p. 72.
[383] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. by Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 231.
[384] Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, p. 12.
[385] Ned Lukacher, *'Primal Scene's: Literature, Philosophy, Psychoanalysis*, p. 35.
[386] Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Completed Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* Volume XVII, p. 44.

effects and effects that are also causes. Freud describes this point in the phenomenon of trauma. Cathy Caruth explains that trauma generally is accepted as:

> a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event.[387]

Freud was astonished at dreams which occurred in traumatic neuroses from World War I when he found that they resisted wish-fulfillment function of dreams. These traumatic dreams did not have a symbolic meaning in terms of showing repressed wishes or referring to something in the unconscious:

> Dreams occurring in traumatic neuroses have the characteristics of repeatedly bringing the patient back into the situation of his accident, a situation from which he wakes up in another fright. This astonishes people far too little. Anyone who accepts it as something self-evident that dreams should put them back at night into the situation that caused them to fall ill has misunderstood the nature of dreams.[388]

The returning traumatic dream astonishes Freud because it cannot be understood in terms of any wish or unconscious meaning. It is the literal return of the event against the will of the one it inhabits. Trauma points toward its enigmatic core: it is the delayed or belated uncertainty of the event. The overwhelming immediacy of the event which returned repeatedly in traumatic dreams produces its belated uncertainty. Indeed the belated return of the event makes it difficult to have access to our own experience:

> It may happen that someone gets away, apparently unharmed, from the spot where he has suffered a shocking accident, for instance a train collision. In the course of the following weeks, however, he develops a series of grave physical and motor symptoms, which can be ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident. He has developed a 'traumatic neurosis.' This appears quite incomprehensible and is therefore a novel fact. The time that elapsed between the accident and the first appearance

[387] Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 4.
[388] Sigmund Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' in *The Standard Edition of the Completed Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XVIII, p. 13.

> of the symptoms is called the 'incubation period,' a transparent allusion to the pathology of infectious disease [….] It is the feature one might term *latency*.[389]

The term 'latency' is the period during which the effects of the experience are not apparent. It seems that Freud describes trauma as the movement from an event to its repression to its return. This delay is what Lukacher called 'deferred reaction' which makes accessibility to the experience of the past impossible. A constellation[390] of events in traumatic experience returns and they are not assimilable to associative chains of meaning. No organization can be applied to them to be recounted meaningfully.

In this sense, the 'primal scene' becomes the non-originary origin in which not a single event occurs in a single temporal sequence but a constellation of events occur in several discrete temporal sequences. Here the relation between Blanchot and Freud in terms of the 'primal scene' becomes ambiguous. The constellation of events doesn't bring each person into a single identity but they cause conflict, and every conflict becomes the beginning of an older conflict. According to Blanchot, this process leads to:

> a fundamental insufficiency; each of us experiences the self as being insufficient. It is as though we had access to the various forms of existence only as deprived of ourselves, and deprived of everything.[391]

The deprivation of any selfhood is experienced in the primal scene when Blanchot writes the child is opened to *'the ordinary sky, with clouds, grey light - pallid daylight without depth*.'[392] The child or the subject 'I' is loosened to a complex obscure daylight in which the child feels what Blanchot calls a *ravaging joy*. The obscure daylight and non- confident pleasure implies the indeterminacy of the subjectivity. Therefore, the sky opens to an existence which is described as 'nothing is what there is'. The 'interminable feature' of the scene means that the scene is not an origin as such because there are endless scenes before and after it. These states of the past, present, and future enclose nothing.

Blanchot reveals characteristic of this scene - namely that all has been 'lost' and the sky is 'black' and 'empty' now. There is 'nothing' in the sky. This reminds us of the empty past filled with phantoms, a past that we were never present at. It also implies the absence of

[389] Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, Trans. by Katherine Jones (New York: Vintage, 1939), p. 84.
[390] Walter Benjamin uses this term which refers to his idea of allegory as something which does not refer to specific meaning but a constellation of thoughts.
[391] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 231.
[392] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, p. 72.

origin, and presence characterizes this open sky. The negation understood from this implies the negation without negation because it is actually the 'infant's sole presence' which means a state between being and non-being. Actually, what explains the absence of origin and presence is the presence of being and non-being at the same time. Blanchot reveals this for the child by breaking the window pane. The narrator in Blanchot's *récit*, *Death Sentence* (1948), also experiences an event similar to the child in the primal scene when he sees the woman from the window pane that he has not seen for six years. The narrator comments on the scene that he felt the great pleasure pass through him:

> The truth is that after I had been fortunate enough to see her once through a pane of glass, the only thing I wanted, during the whole time I knew her, was to feel that 'great pleasure' again through her, and also break the glass.[393]

Blanchot in the expansion of the state of between being and non-being later writes:

> 'nothing is what there is' rules out being said in a calm and simple negation (as though in its place the eternal translator wrote 'There is nothing'). - No negation, but heavy terms, like whole stanzas juxtaposed while remaining without any connection, each one closed in self-sufficiency (but not upon any meaningfulness) - each one immobile and mute, and all of them thus usurping the sentence their relation forms, a sentence whose intended significance we would be hard put to explain. - Hard put is an understatement: there passes through this sentence what it can contain only by bursting. - For my part, I hear only the inevitability of the *il y a*, in which being and nothing roll like a great wave, unfurling it and folding it back under, inscribing and effacing it, to the rhythm of a nameless rustling.[394]

This excerpt clarifies the coexistence of negation and affirmation (negation without negation). The 'nothing,' for Blanchot, is the state of *il y a*, a term used by Levinas which means the state of being and non-being. [395] The *il y a* which is translated 'there is' is a

[393] Maurice Blanchot, *Death Sentence,* p. 44.
[394] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, p. 116.
[395] Levinas thinks of this topic in *Existence and Existents*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1978). pp. 52-64. The *il y a* again appears in *Totality and Infinity* where it is called 'the elemental.' See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. by Alphons Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969). See also Emmanuel Levinas, 'Sense and There Is' in *Otherwise Then Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. by Alphons Lingis

beginningless and endless continuity. The expression 'there is' expresses the facticity of the being which is not the effect of some antecedent agent. The state of *il y a* and the 'nothing' reveals the nothingness of a being that exists already and independently of humankind. Thus humankind's being is grounded on a beginningless and endless continuity.

This notion of being is traced back to Martin Heidegger who attempts in his project to work out a fresh analysis of what it is to be human. Heidegger in a phenomenological approach studies Being qua Being, that is in a detached way by discovering the discipline that underlines being. Blanchot was influenced by Heidegger; as Herman Rapaport writes:

> One French intellectual influenced by Heidegger is the essayist and novelist Maurice Blanchot. Moreover, by the late 1950s Blanchot had advanced a vocabulary derived from Heidegger (i.e., dissemination, decentring, the end of the book).[396]

Heidegger's study of being, from his early project in *Being and Time* (1927) to his turn toward linguistic analysis of Being in *Logik, Heraklits Lehre Von Logos* in the *Gesamtausgabe* in 1943-1944, dismantles the notion that man is determined or singled out because he possesses reason, logic and self-evident identity. [397] Heidegger's famous account of 'Dasein' as being-in-the-world argues for the disarticulation of the metaphysical subject or ego. Hubert L. Deryfus on his comment on Heidegger's project on Being writes:

> Heidegger questions the view that experience is always and most basically a relation between a self-contained subject with mental content (inner) and an independent object (outer).[398]

With this question, Heidegger disputes Descartes' belief that there must be some content in our minds that enables us to direct our minds toward each object. This intentional content in our consciousness was investigated by Husserl.[399] Thus, for Heidegger, being-in-the-world challenges the separation of subject from object. In his existential analysis of *Dasein*, Heidegger shows that:

(The Hauge: Martinus Nilhoff, 1981) and Emmanuel Levinas, *Collected Philosophical Papers*, trans. by Alphons Lingis (The Hauge: Martinus Nilhoff, 1987).

[396] Herman Rapaport, *Heidegger, Derrida: Reflections on Time and Language,* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p. 111.

[397] Martin Heidegger, *Gessamtaausgabe,* vol. 55 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Kolstermann, 1979).

[398] Hubert L. Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995), p. 5.

[399] For the discussion of Hussel's 'intentionality,' see A. D. Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditations* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

> In each case *Dasein* is already in a definite world and alongside a definite range of definite entities within-world.[400]

For Heidegger, *Dasein* is thrown in the world and encounters already some given contents and concerns. Emmanuel Levinas comments on this thrownness that:

> It is as if the existent [beings] appeared only in an existence [Being] that precedes it, as though existence were independent of the existent, and the existent that finds itself thrown there could never become master of existence. It is precisely because of this that there is desertion and abandonment. Thus dawns the idea of an existing that occurs without a subject, an existing without existents.[401]

On the basis of these contents or possibilities, *Dasein* acts in order to 'gather' its being. This definition reveals that *Dasein* is basically groundless and meaningless and by projecting on given possibilities in the world becomes being. Dreyfus writes:

> Thus, *Dasein* can have no concrete possibilities of its own on which to project; it can have no fixed identity; indeed, its only essential or ownmost possibility is nothingness. Heidegger calls this the 'inessentiality of the self.'[402]

Since *Dasein* has no possibilities of its own and is groundless and meaningless, the null or nothing is its basis. Therefore, it is impossible for *Dasein* to acquire an identity of its own. This is why *Dasein*'s existence, for Heidegger, amounts to nothingness: nil, lacking, and nonexistent:

> The Self, which as such has to lay the basis for itself, can *never* get that basis into its power; and yet, as existing, it must take over Being-a-basis. In Being a basis - that is, in existing as thrown - Dasein constantly lags behind its possibilities. Thus 'Being-a-basis' means *never* to have power over one's ownmost Being from the ground up. This *'not*' belongs to the existential

[400] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. by John Marquarrie and Edward Robinson (India: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 264.
[401] Emanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other,* trans. by Richard A. Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987), p. 45.
[402] Hubert L. Dreyfus, 'Kierkegaard, Division II, and Later Heideger' in *Being-in-the-World* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995), p. 310.

meaning of 'thrownness.' It itself, being a basis, is a nullity of itself.[403]

The 'not' of nullity is not non-existentiality or non-subsisting, but it should be thought that the 'not' is the ground for existence. However, *Dasein's* groundlessness causes to defer to find its basis as its being. In the other words, the Being of *Dasein* is null before it can project on things.

Heidegger, in his turn to linguistic analysis of being in *heraklit*, turns to close linguistic analysis of Heraclitus's Greek. In Heraclitus, *logos* is equal to logic and reason which makes the essence of humankind. According to Rapaport, Heidegger attempts to demonstrate that:

> *logos*, in other words, has to be comprehended in terms of gathering or collecting, and is a site where other terms are brought together or gathered even as they fall away as one term comes to stand for another. Unlike the metaphysical notion of logic in which only absolutely necessary entities are all saved and systematized, the *Logos* of Heraclitus is a much more open field in which there occurs appropriation and disappropriation. The significance of this view for a conception of humankind is that Heidegger views 'man,' or *anthropos*, not as a controlling ego whose essence is reason or logic, but as a collection of closely related attributes that in their proximity to one another have achieved both nearness and distance.[404]

For Heidegger, *Dasein* (in its nullity or nothingness which signifies that it has no basis) projects on possibilities in the world which are not its own and finds its being as a collection of attributes which are in proximity, that is they never form a fixed essence. Whatever is 'gathered' in *Dasein* is never completed and determined. Thus, *Dasein* is defined as something between being and non-being in the process of becoming and lags always behind its basis. Rapaport writes that *Dasein*'s being-in-the-world is inherently undecidable:

> In this manifold of undecidable proximities, then, 'The question of being itself is at once the question of Non-Being and of Nothingness.'[405]

[403] Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time,* p. 330.
[404] Herman Rapaport, *Heidegger, Derrida: Reflections on Time and Language,* p. 105.

This question of Being and Nothingness for Heidegger is posed in his other writing, 'What Is Metaphysics?' In 'The Response to the Question' section of this essay, Heidegger identifies 'nothing' with the essence of Being. If there exists an essence for Being, it is the nothing which is not non-being. This nothingness is the nullity of *Dasein* in its thrownness in the world and makes Dasein possible. Heidegger writes that the nothing is neither an object nor any being but it is what brings about the openness of Being:

> For human existence the nothing makes possible the openness of beings as such. The nothing does not merely serve as the counterconcept of beings; rather it originally belongs to their essential unfolding as such. In the Being of beings the nihilation of the nothing occurs.[406]

The openness of beings is the outcome of *Dasein'*s projection in the world. The point of departure of this projection is the nothing in which the nihilation of totality of beings occurs. Therefore, the nothing signifies the questioning of beings as a whole:

> The nothing is the complete negation of the totality of beings.[407]

David Wood, in his rewriting of Heidegger's essay in a contemporary idiom, understands this openness of being as the main feature:

> Here we find indetermination in the form of *incompleteness.*[408]

Here we understand how Blanchot's notion of 'nothing is what there is' and *il y a* mean the state of being without determined attributes. This notion of being is what Blanchot calls the neuter or the Outside which hints at the openness of Being from its origin to its future:

> Everything is exterior, and he himself is scarcely anything but this exterior: the outside, a radical without unity, a dispersing.[409]

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[405] Herman Rapaport, *Heidegger, Derrida: Reflections on Time and Language*, p. 109.
[406] Martin Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?' in *Basic Writings from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1946)*, ed. by David Farrell Krell (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 106.
[407] Martin Heidegger, 'What is Metaphysics?' in *Basic Writings from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1946)*, p. 100.
[408] David Wood, *Thinking After Heidegger* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), p. 16.
[409] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 232.

Exterior and interior are one and no border is drawn between this being and outside. This implies also that no time-space dimension can be considered for this state. The past, the present and the future coexist without any primacy. Being disperses rather than maintaining in a unified whole.

Blanchot's primal scene brings up this notion of being. Thus, the primal scene is not limited to the past but can also be in future. As Lukacher writes, the 'primal scene' demands that:

> the origin be sought not in the past, buried by forgetfulness, but in the future, in the projective repetition of the origin as it is elaborated through the transference.[410]

The 'primal scene' is an event which occurred in the past but it continues to the future. It loses its originary state and disperses throughout the past, the present, and the future. It should be considered that this is a state of being and non-being which entails an idea of repetition which demands difference within itself. When the primal scene disperses it transforms into otherness. The 'primal scene's transformation is its dispersion which Lukacher considers as the repetition of the 'primal scene.'

If we consider the *récit* as striving to find a 'primal scene', in Blanchot's view, it is impossible in this state of *il y a* for the *rècit* to repeat (narrate) the past because memory is not stable and does not contain fixed material to be represented in the narrative. Regarding my last chapter, memory cannot be recalled voluntarily (in Proust's meaning). What is repeated from the past is neither the actual happening nor what we remember of the past. No origin can be considered for what is going to be repeated because memory is empty. Therefore, if Blanchot writes his *récit*, he, according to this chaotic self, denotes the unrepeatability of the past and the event or unpresentability of the presence. Actually, the *récit* becomes the repetition of the unrepeatable (unpresentable). The absence of the narrator's memory in *Death Sentence* (1948) after those events (the suspense of the death) happened to him relates to the revelation of this state and the inability to recall the past:

> Its uprightness is what actually fascinates me. When this thought appears, memory is no longer present, nor uneasiness, nor forboding , nor any recalling of yesterday, nor any plan for tomorrow. It appears, and perhaps

[410] Ned Lukacher, *Primal Scenes: Literature, Philosophy, Psychoanalysis*, p. 42.

it has appeared a thousands times, ten thousands times.[411]

This brings about the silence which occupies the narrator and speaks of 'an inaccessible, unreal country, closed off from everyone and most of all from myself.'[412] While the narrator experiences the suspense of death traumatically, she neither remembers nor forgets it. The event never stop and repeats thousands times. This reminds us of Blanchot's view of the 'primal scene' that it disperses and transforms into otherness. Every time the narrator experiences the suspense of death, it is a different and new event. In this sense, the event is subject to differance and repetition without being presented completely. [413] Such a 'primal scene', which presents the lost origin and deferral process, makes narrative impossible. Narrative that shapes a story into associated chains of meaning by the discourse becomes impossible.

The Outside as the Other and Becoming in the Primal Scene

The main consequences of the 'primal scene' are the ideas of the 'other' and the state of 'becoming' both of which help us understand better the lost origin, the deferral process, and difference in repetition. In other words, the *récit* presents the 'other' and the state of 'becoming' which signifies the impossibility of narrative. Blanchot's *Madness of the Day* (1949) is an illustration of this discussion.

The first line of *Madness of the Day* (1949) points us to Blanchot's 'primal scene' in *The Writing of the Disaster*. The one who speaks in this text is the one who sees a scene, a 'primal scene,' as he calls the day. The 'I' (it is not necessarily the narrator in the sense that he is not in possession of a self when he sees the day) says:

> I am not learned; I am not ignorant. I have known joys. And this life gives me the greatest pleasure.[414]

It seems that the 'I' has seen a scene like the child in the 'primal scene' about which Blanchot writes in *The Disaster of the Writing*. The 'I' is neither learned nor ignorant and this implies a

[411] Maurice Blanchot, *Death Sentence*, p. 32.
[412] Maurice Blanchot, p. 33.
[413] The term is used by Derrida and also by Blanchot in *The Step Not Beyond.* In Derrida see Jacques Derrida, 'Difference' in *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. by David B. Allison and Newton Garver (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), pp. 129-160. See also Jacques Derrida, 'Difference' in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 3-27.
[414] Maurice Blanchot, *The Madness of the Day,* trans. by George Quasha (New York: Station Hill Press, 1981), p. 5.

state between being and non-being. The light of the day makes neither visible nor invisible. To put it differently, it is neither illuminating nor obscuring. The 'I' is outside of the realm of memory and it is the empty past because he says 'as reason returned to me, memory came with it.'[415] 'Joys' and 'the greatest pleasure' of this state which is experienced by the narrator remind us of the joy of the child after witnessing the scene:

> The unexpected aspect of this scene, its interminable feature, the feeling of happiness that straightaway submerges the child, the ravaging joy.[416]

The 'I' continues that he has seen the absolute, or the presence which is characterized as non-totality and absolute difference. It is called 'nothing':

> I am not blind, I see the world-what extraordinary happiness! I see this day, and outside it there is nothing.[417]

This day makes the 'I' see the past, the present, and the future at the same time. This is because there is nothing outside it. Actually, there is no beyond and the 'outside' does not mean that something exists beyond this day. Beyond this day, it is nothing and it is nothing inside as well. In other words, there is no inside and outside. 'Nothing' means difference and the 'I' experiences a scene outside of limitation, finalization, and totality. These are against sameness and situates the 'I' in a process of 'becoming,' a situation that is unpredictable.

The 'I' sees the scene which is opened onto the 'outside' or the 'beyond' which are unlocatable in terms of time or place. The 'I' sees something in this 'outside' or 'beyond;' as Jacques Derrida says,

> 'I see' the element of visibility, of that visibility which is visible, the phenomenality of the phenomenon; thus I see vision, both eyesight and what it can see, the stage [*scene*] and the possibility of representation [*scene*], the scene of visibility, a *'primal scene'*.[418]

What makes the scene to be visible, according to Derrida, is that the scene has been seen in phenomenality. The *'primal scene'* is the phenomenon which can be seen in itself and

[415] Maurice Blanchot, *The Madness of the Day,* p. 6.
[416] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster,* p. 72.
[417] Maurice Blanchot, *The Madness of the Day,* p. 6.
[418] Jacque Derrida, 'Living On: Border Line' in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1979), p. 90.

entirely. When something is seen in phenomenality it is seen not from one side, but wholly and completely. The element of visibility is the phenomenality of the scene which signifies the possibility of being seen as a phenomenon. This is why Derrida continues to write in his comment on the scene in Blanchot's text:

> 'seeing on' is a vision-beyond-vision. To see sight or vision or visibility, to see beyond what is visible, is not merely 'to have a vision' in the usual sense of the word, but to see-beyond-sight, to see-sight-beyond sight.[419]

For Derrida, the phenomenality of the scene or the *'primal scene'* is openness, being 'beyond' which reminds us of his criticism of Husserl's phenomenology. To see a thing in itself is to see 'beyond' it. The narrator of the scene in Blanchot's text sees 'beyond' the scene as the 'primal scene' which opens to another prior scene.

Derrida's point about the visibility of the scene or the 'primal scene' has another implication which refers to something which is invisible. The vision 'beyond' the vision is what cannot be seen:

> Visibility should-not be visible. According to an old, omnipotent logic that has reigned since Plato, that which enables us to see should remain invisible: black, blinding.[420]

This invisible is what Derrida names as the vision or the visibility of the scene in his comment on Blanchot's text. Lacan writes about this invisibility as the gaze:

> In our relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from the stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it - that is what we call the gaze.[421]

The 'something' which slips is the invisible in the scene and remains 'beyond' the sight, a vision 'beyond' vision as Derrida says.

Derrida's visibility of the scene and Lacan's gaze can leads us to the main feature of the scene in Blanchot's own expression as the Outside which the subject 'I' experiences in the

[419] Jacque Derrida, 'Living On: Border Line' in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, p. 91.
[420] Jacque Derrida, p. 91
[421] Jacques Lacan, 'The Eye and the Gaze,' in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 73.

'primal scene,' the state between being and non-being or *il y a*. It is written with a capital 'O' because it is a proper name but with its own propriety which makes it different from proper name. It means that its propriety is the very opposite of the fixed trait ascribed as proper to a proper name. The significance of the Outside as the experience of the day (or a 'primal scene' or the nature of event) may show the impossibility of narrative. The Outside (the scene or the day seen by the 'I') can be illustrated in this way that as soon as we are in relation within a field open to a new possibility it may be thought as a force which threatens to lose our identity. We try to comprehend this new possibility. This means that we identify anything different from us with ourselves in order to reduce it to our own property, something that already belongs to us. So it is an essential mode for us to gather the diverse possibilities into unity. All these words - unity, identification, reduction - conceal within them the system of reason by which the unknown is rendered to the known. What is to be known - the unknown - must be submitted to the known. But Blanchot proposes another kind of relation by which we are open to anything other than us:

> But then comes this apparently innocent question: might there not exist relations, such as language, that is to say a language, escaping this movement of force through which the world does not cease to accomplish itself?[422]

This other relation is a dangerous direction, a strange thought that does not allow the system of our thought to be in the mode of appropriative comprehension. This strange thought, for Blanchot, is the thought of impossibility, the measure of the *other*:

> What would this other measure be? Perhaps precisely the measure of the *other*.[423]

What opens in the Outside is this impossibility which introduces the *other*. The *other* is the invention of impossibility. It is the invention as a movement of affirmation in order to make a space for an inventiveness open to the wholly 'other.' This invention means an undoing of closed structures in order to make possible the coming of the 'other.' This *other* is not an other which merely reinforces the same, not an other which is simply outside or absolutely new, but the one that displaces the very opposition of same and other, inside and outside, old and new. This Outside has two characteristics. First, time changes direction, no longer goes outside of future as going beyond; time is rather the dispersion of a present that, even while it

[422] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 43.
[423] Maurice Blanchot, p. 43.

is passing, does not pass and never fix itself in a present. It refers to no past and goes toward no future. This reminds us of what I discussed in the previous chapter as the 'extended present.' Second, there is an immediacy considered as presence which is ungraspable and we cannot escape from it. Blanchot makes this situation different from a dialectical movement which has to do with opposition or with reconciliation. In this sense, this is where the *other* never comes back to the same. These two characteristics are called the secret of 'becoming.'[424]

So the experience of the Outside entails the experience of the *other* and 'becoming.' These two notions becomes the meaning of presence for Blanchot:

> If we hold these traits together-the present that does not pass, while being only passage; that which cannot be let go of, while offering nothing to hold onto; the too present to which access is denied because it is always closer than any approach, reversing itself to become absence and thus being too-present that does not present itself, yet without leaving anything in which one might absent oneself from it.[425]

Blanchot, here, concludes that impossibility is not only negativity but also the excess of affirmation. The point is that the Outside spreads itself as presence. In this present, everything is suspended because of a dispersal of the present and yet a presence exterior to itself because of the Outside. The Outside as presence involves the inside and removes any dimension of inside and outside. Because of its dispersal, it becomes present forever. It always remains, i.e. it is always in the process of 'becoming' without achieving perfection. In this sense, the Outside comes outside of time-space dimension. The *other* and 'becoming' become the presence which is always present without being in any time-space dimension. The idea of 'to-come' in Derrida can illustrate better the secret of the *other* and 'becoming' in the idea of the Outside. Derrida in his essay 'Force of Law' writes about 'a 'to-come' that one will have to rigorously distinguish from future.' Derrida then goes on to write that

> the future loses the openness, the coming of the other (who comes); and the future can always reproduce the present, announce itself or present itself as future present in the modified form of the present.[426]

[424] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 46.
[425]Maurice Blanchot, p. 46.

Everything becomes present in the endless process of 'becoming.' The future is closed and finite in the sense that it comes to the present time and repeats the present time. The future comes to the present and ends because it is closed by the present. In other words, it does not remain open to what is going to come. But the idea of 'to come' is a dispersed present that endlessly comes.

Let me explain the relation between the Outside and the *récit* before I continue to read Blanchot's *Madness of the Day*. Once we understand characteristics of the Outside (the *other* and the state of 'becoming') experienced by the 'I' as the day which shows the empty memory and the state between being and non-being, we can infer that the event, the day experienced by the 'I', is impossible to be recounted since it is always outside and has not occurred completely yet. No narrative theory is applied to this scene. The story-teller (the 'I') can present the Outside only by the *récit* which never picks up an origin to repeat it as narrative. The *récit* presents the *other* and the state of 'becoming.' In other words, it should be said that the *récit* is the space of presenting the *other* and 'becoming.' We use the verb 'present' because the *other* is not something in the past to be represented (present again). The *other* is always present and it is presented in the time of its invention. The time of its invention and its presentation is the same. Therefore, it is not re-presentation or presenting again. It also implies that if we repeat its presence, it is not re-presentation because every time something new is invented and presented. Therefore, it is not represented, but it is always presented. It also can be said that it only ever comes a first time. For the *other* to be the *other*, to be unique (even uniqueness has to be repeatable),

> it is also necessary for this first time, this unique moment of origin, to be a last time. It is one and only instant.[427]

In this connection, speech-act theory may help. In speech-act theory, there is a distinction between two kinds of speech: constative and performative:

> Constative - discovering or unveiling, pointing out or saying what is - and performative - producing, instituting, transformation.[428]

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[426] Jacques Derrida, 'Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority' in *Acts of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 256.
[427] Jacques Derrida, 'From Psyche' in *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Atrridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 317.
[428] Jacques Derrida, 'From Psyche' in *Acts of Literature*, p. 324.

In Austin's speech act theory, performative sentences are contrasted to constatives. Performatives are sentences that do not just 'say' something, but rather perform a certain kind of action. The peculiarity of the performative utterance, in contrast to the constative, is that it does not describe a state of affairs independent of itself, but that it is itself the reality it describes. It is therefore a self-reflexive utterance.[429] In the *récit,* the constative statement is the performative itself, since it points out nothing that is prior or foreign to itself. So the event that is produced in the *récit* is the very act of recounting it. The event and the act of recounting it are the same and one. The word 'scene' also means representation or the stage. In a paradoxical manner, the Outside is a scene (the place of representation) that cannot be represented because it opens to the *other* and the state of 'becoming.' But at the same time, this impossibility of presentation, for Blanchot, means 'presence' and the *récit* narrates this presence.' As Blanchot writes,

> It is immediate presence or presence as Outside.[430]

If we refer back to the text of *Madness of the Day* (1949), we see that the 'I' has a brief vision again like the first one in which he sees the day. This time just at the corner of the street he sees a woman with a baby carriage had stopped. The woman attempts to get the carriage through the outer door. At that moment, a man goes through that door. He had already stepped across the sill when he moves backward and comes out again. While he stands next to the door, the woman crosses the sill and disappears inside. The 'I' says:

> this brief scene excited me to the point of delirium. I was undoubtedly not able to explain it to myself fully and yet I was sure of it, that I had seized the moment when the day, having stumbled against a real event, would begin hurrying to its end. Here it comes, I said to myself, the end is becoming; something is happening, the end is beginning. I was seized by joy.[431]

He is excited to the point of madness. He witnesses the day as a real event. Something happens not in the past or the present. The beginning of this event is the end of it and the end is the beginning at the same time. This event of madness is unrepresentable, that is, the scene does not re-present (present something anew or again) because there is nothing to be

[429] J.L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words,* Second Ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 5.
[430] Maurice Blanchot*, The Infinite Conversation,* p. 46.
[431] Maurice Blanchot, *The Madness of the Day,* p. 10.

represented. It presents itself when it occurs. The reality of the event is its happening during its telling. This scene is the same as the child's 'primal scene' when the 'I' says:

> I lingered in the joy and perfection of this happiness, for one moment my head as high as the stone of the sky and my feet on the pavement.[432]

This reminds us of the sky opened for the child in the 'primal scene'. It seems that sky is opened for the 'I' and the entire world disappears inside it. He comes out of that scene when someone crushes glass in his eye. This shows someone wants him to narrate the scene. Someone wants a truth behind the event. But he is unable to narrate the scene because he has been in a void.

Another part in this text which illustrates unrepresentability because of the *other* and 'becoming' is where the 'I' is before the law. The 'I' is unable to recount events he sees when he is called by the law to recount his story. For the law, individuals are the same; it rejects their singularity which means the individuality of a thing that would not be identical to itself and discloses or divides itself in gathering itself to answer to the 'other.'[433] The law likes crowds because crowds signify sameness, the rejection of individuals' singularity. This is clear when the 'I' says 'I was attracted to the law, I liked crowds. Among other people I was unknown.'[434] The law is against the idea of the *other* and 'becoming' which characterizes the singularity of individuals. The law wants the origin and the story. It associates with single identity, repetition without difference, and narration. This law interrogates the 'I', demanding a story of him. The law represents the law of writing which wants a truth or meaning behind everything. But the 'I' is unable to narrate his story when doctors and police (as the representatives of the law) ask him to tell his story:

> My story would put itself at their service. In haste, I would rid myself of myself. I distributed my blood, my inner most being among them, lent them the universe, gave them the day. I reduced myself to them. The whole of me passed in full view before them, and at last nothing was present but my perfect nothingness and there was nothing more to see, they ceased to see me

[432] Maurice Blanchot, *The Madness of the Day*, pp. 10-11.
[433] Jacques Derrida, 'Eating Well' in *Who Comes After the Subject*?, ed. by Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 100.
[434] Maurice Blanchot, *The Madness of the Day*, p. 9.

too.[435]

The 'I' calls his meeting trial. In his trial, he must retell his story. This is similar to Joseph K.'s trial in Kafka's *The Trial* which I will discuss in the next chapter. The law obliges K. to tell his story in a narrative form. The 'I's story in Blanchot's text is what happened in the day (a 'primal scene') which he has seen. He is obliged to tell a story of himself as it happened to him. He is forced also to become a narrative voice who tells his story at a distance from the event. But the 'I' is not the narrative voice; he cannot narrate what cannot be narrated: the *other* and 'becoming.' These two states are evident when he invites the law to confront it rather than being obedient to it:

I called softly to her, 'Come here, let me see you face to face.'[436]

He puts himself before the law and on the side of it at the same time.

The 'I' calls the law woman. She is described as a female that the 'I' seduces and steps all over and she becomes his servant. Indeed, the 'I' transgresses the law to respond to the demand of another law, one that lurks behind the doctors' backs. This other law is neither a better law nor lawlessness. This law introduces the *other* and 'becoming' into the narrative. In this new situation in search of story, he, she, and the representatives of the law (doctors and police) listen to the silence that the 'I' speaks. The silence is the truth behind the event:

I had become involved in their search. We are all like masked hunters.

Who was being questioned? Who was answering? One became the other. The words spoke by themselves.[437]

He, she, and we become neuter in telling the story. Story becomes the *récit* in which the narrative voice is 'neuter.' It means that nobody speaks. The words speak themselves. Here he calls the law 'difference':

This law was different.[438]

Derrida calls the law which presents 'difference' the 'feminine element':

No, she is described as a 'female element,' which does not signify a female

[435] Maurice Blanchot, p. 14.
[436] Maurice Blanchot, p. 9.
[437] Maurice Blanchot, p. 17.
[438] Maurice Blanchot, p. 14.

person.[439]

The 'feminine element' draws our attention to the state of the narrative as the 'neuter.' For the 'feminine element' does not belong to a specific gender, man or woman. Blanchot, in his theoretical-fictional text, *The Step Not Beyond,* presents this element as 'neuter' or the 'Thing' meaning that it is a space of neutrality in terms of gender distinction.

> The thing, like the he/it, like the neuter or the outside, indicates a plurality characterized by singularizing itself and by appearing, by default, to rest in the indeterminate. That the Thing has a relation to the Neuter: outrages and finally inadmissible supposition, in so far as the neuter cannot arrest itself in a subject noun, even this be collective, having also this movement of diverting anything to which it would apply itself from its momentaneous essence.[440]

This element which is expressed as the 'Thing' signifies the notion of difference and the 'other.' The 'feminine element' is the neutral element that is neither male nor female. It is an element that effects a deferring and differing within the concept of femininity or masculinity. Undecidability and indeterminacy is implied by the feminine element. It is not only a problem for gender categories but keeps the space of gender formation open to the 'other.' It implies that the 'other' is this element which defers the formation of gender.

Besides the indeterminacy of gender formation, the most important point about this element is the heterogeneity that exists in everything. Derrida writes: 'identity is a self-differentiating identity, an identity different from itself, having an opening or gap within itself […] I am not one with myself that I can speak with the other and address the other.'[441] Heterogeneity, in this sense, means that the self engages with the 'other' which is neither outside nor inside. The 'other' eliminates the boundary between inside and outside. The 'other' entails the impossibility of closure, being open to come.

Moreover, the 'I' wants the madness of the law, the madness of the day. The madness of the law is the madness of the *récit*. This encounter with the law constitutes the *récit*'s transgressive moment. This madness is the presentation of the *other* and 'becoming,' going outside of narrative. Jacques Derrida makes this point about the madness of the law:

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[439] Jacques Derrida, 'The Law of Genre' in *Acts of Literature,* p. 247.
[440] Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond,* p. 73.
[441] Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida,* ed. by John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), p. 14.

> For the law to see the day is her madness, is what she loves madly like glory, the sunlit illustration, the day of the author who says 'I,' and who brings forth law to the light of the day. He says that she is insaturable, insatiable for his glory- he who is, too, author of the law to which he submits himself, he who engenders her.[442]

According to Derrida, the 'I' is the law who bring 'the sunlit illustration' of the day which is nothing but the *récit* which produces the law. This mad law is the law of the *other* and 'becoming' which accepts no origin and repetition. This is her madness. The 'I' at the end of the text is asked to tell what happened. He repeats the sentence of the first line of the text:

> I am not learned; I am not ignorant. I have known joys.[443]

He tells them the whole story and at the end they say that was the beginning. The 'I' says he is not able to form a story out of these events. The madness of the *récit* is unrepresentability, an abyss; as the 'I' says at the very end:

> A story? No. No stories, never again.[444]

We can say that this text is a *récit* about a *récit.* It is a text in the form of the *récit* (with characteristics that Blanchot considers such as the occurrence of event in the time of telling, no origin as a story to be represented, and difference in repetition) about the essence of a *récit.* It tells what a *récit* is. If we think in terms of traditional distinction between form and content, we can say the form of this text is the *récit* and the content is 'what is *the récit'*. To put it differently, it is a narrative which narrates an escape from narration.

[442] Derrida, Jacques, 'The Law of Genre' in *Acts of Literature,* ed. by Derek Atrridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 250.
[443] Maurice Blanchot, *The Madness of the Day,* p. 18.
[444] Maurice Blanchot, p. 18.

Chapter 7

Kafka's Fiction and the Impossibility of Narration as Récit

As I discussed in the last two chapters, the *récit* happens outside memory completely in the sense that memory is no longer perceived as the place in which the experiences of the past have passed but it is the space outside the time-place measurements in which past events are experienced anew or, as Kevin Hart writes, are created:

> For Blanchot, *récit* means several things: first, it relates just the one unusual event; second, it does not report an event but creates it in the process of narration.[445]

In recounting the past, this condition puts the narrator in a state between being and non-being in which the narrator is always in the present, what Blanchot calls the 'terrifying ancient.'[446] This 'extended present' or the 'terrifying ancient' is not categorized sequentially from the past to future. In other words, it is always in the process of becoming without a starting point or ending. The *récit* thus involves ideas such as 'the other' and 'becoming' which means the *récit* is not haunted by memory and the past, but goes forward rejecting finality.[447] The *récit* is not the repetition of the past but the repetition of unrepeatability and of the non-originary state of telling a story of the past.

Concerning the idea of the 'extended present' in memory or the state between being and non-being, Blanchot's version of the primal scene, as argued in *The Writing of the Disaster*, clarifies how recalling the past in narrative mode is impossible.[448] Blanchot, in a fragment, writes about the 'primal scene' by which he argues that the formation of the first person, the 'I' confident in his or her powers, who is capable of remembering and forgetting, is impossible. Therefore, Blanchot's 'primal scene' rejects the construction of the single subject 'I.' The primal scene that illustrates the irrevocability of the past opens the self to what comes, to the future. In this chapter, I argue Kafka's *Trial* while I am thinking of Blanchot's *récit*.

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[445] Kevin Hart, *The Dark Gaze* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 63.
[446] Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, trans. by Lycette Nelson (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 32.
[447] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. by Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), p. 46.
[448] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p. 72.

According to Max Brod, *The Trial*'s chapter divisions were established by Kafka but their arrangement is based on Brod's own judgment.[449] From the view point of narratology, events must have logical and strong causal connections to make a story. But we can see in *The Trial* that one event is included in one chapter and is separated from the other events in terms of following one single story. Chapters are left unfinished without linking to each other. They can be displaced without changing the story because Kafka has not determined any arrangement for chapters. K. in his trial struggles to enter the law but it always defers. As Derrida writes, it is the differance of the event to be narrated.[450] It implies the impossibility of narration, since for Kafka the event of the trial cannot be narrated as it is. Kafka's text as the récit illustrates the impossibility of narration.

Before analyzing *The Trial* (1920) while thinking Blanchot's *récit*, I will give a summary of the story. On his thirtieth birthday, a junior bank manager, Josef K., who lives in lodgings, is unexpectedly arrested by two unidentified agents for an unspecified crime.[451] The agents do not name the authority for which they are acting. He is not taken away, however, but left at home to await instructions from the Committee of Affairs. Josef K. goes to visit the Magistrate, but instead is forced to have a meeting with an attendant's wife. Looking at the Magistrate's books, he discovers a cache of pornography. Josef returns home to find Fräulein Montag, a lodger from another room, moving in with Fräulein Bürstner. He suspects that this is to prevent him from pursuing his affair with the latter woman. Yet another lodger, Captain Lanz, appears to have a relation with Montag. Later, in a store room at his own bank, Josef K. discovers the two agents who arrested him being whipped by a flogger for asking Josef for bribes, as a result of complaints that Josef K. had previously made about them to the Magistrate. Josef K. tries to argue with the flogger, saying that the men need not be whipped, but the flogger cannot be swayed. The next day he returns to the store room and is shocked to find everything as he had found it the day before, including the Whipper and the two agents.

[449] Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, trans. by Willa and Edwin Muir (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 255.
[450] Jacques Derrida, 'Before the Law' in *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Atrridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 203.
[451] Breon Mitchell has translated the first sentence of *The Trial* in such as to show that since the information received about K .is filtered through K.'s mind it is constantly suspect in any case. The English translation is forced to declare K.'s innocence. Breon in his translation tries to move towards the province of criminality in choosing words. See Breon Mitchell, 'Translator's Preface' in *Trial*, trans. by Breon Mitchell (New York: Schoken Books, 1990), p. xix.

Josef K. is visited by his influential uncle, who by coincidence is a friend of a lawyer. That lawyer was with the Clerk of the Court. The uncle is, or appears to be, distressed by Josef's predicament and is at first sympathetic, but becomes concerned that Josef K. is underestimating the seriousness of the case. The uncle introduces Josef K. to an Advocate, who is attended by Leni, a nurse, who is also his mistress. Josef K. has a sexual encounter with Leni, whilst his uncle is talking with the Advocate and the Chief Clerk of the Court, much to his uncle's anger, and to the detriment of his case. K. visits the advocate and finds him to be a capricious and unhelpful character. He is advised by one of his bank clients to visit Titorelli, a painter, for advice. Titorelli has no official connections, yet seems to have a deep understanding of the process. He explains that everything belongs to the Court. He sets out what K's options are, but the consequences of all of them are unpleasant. The laborious requirements of these options, and the limited outlook that they offer, lead the reader to lose hope for K. He decides to take control of his own destiny and visits his advocate with the intention of dismissing him. At the advocate's office he meets a downtrodden individual, Block, a client who offers K. some insight from a client's perspective. Block's case has continued for five years, yet he appears to have been virtually enslaved by his dependence on the advocate's unpredictable advice. This experience further poisons K.'s opinion of his advocate, and K. is bemused as to why his advocate would think that seeing such a client, in such a state, could change his mind. This chapter was left unfinished by the author.

K. has to show around the Cathedral to an important client from Italy. The client doesn't show up but, just as K. is leaving the Cathedral, the priest calls out his name, although K. has never known the priest. The priest works for the court, and tells him a fable, (which has been published separately as *Before the Law*) that is meant to explain his situation, but instead causes confusion, and implies that K.'s fate is hopeless.[452] *Before the Law* begins as a parable, then, continues with several pages of interpretation between the Priest and Josef K. The gravity of the priest's words prepares the reader for an unpleasant ending. On the last day of K.'s thirty-first year, two men arrive to execute him. He offers little resistance, suggesting that he has realized this was inevitable for some time. They lead him to a quarry where he is expected to kill himself, but he cannot. The two men then execute him.

[452] Kafka's 'Before the Law' was published in 1915. The parable which has been included in the main text as a chapter has the theme of the whole text in itself. The part includes the whole. The part seems to be the part and the whole at the same time. Derrida calls this situation 'invagination.' 'Before the Law' is part of *The Trial* and make it part of itself. 'Before the Law' is at once smaller and larger than itself. See Jacques Derrida, 'Living On: Border Line' in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (London: Routledge, 1979), p. 99.

The Creation of Event

In first chapter, K. is arrested, based on an unknown accusation by two unknown strangers. It is an event that occurs from nowhere, since it is unknown what authority they could represent. They do not know the law and K. does not know it either. In the last chapter, this scene happens again. The repetition of the event in the first and the last chapter shows that the story is not a narrative with a beginning and an end. The event remains unpredictable as the two men in the last chapter are still unknown. This unpredictability could be what Derrida argues about event as something which is always unknown and cannot be approximated. Event in this sense does not occur in one instant but it comes in the interminable process.[453] The event calls for a break into the open, something new or different, something that shatters the horizon of the same. This is what Derrida calls the apocalypse which is not termination but is beginning:

> The event of this 'Come' precedes and calls the event. It would be that starting from which there is any event, the *venir*, the *a-venir* of the event that cannot be thought under the given category of event.[454]

This meaning of the event is similar to Blanchot's *Madness of the Day* when the narrator says the end is coming, the end is beginning. [455] The narrator in Blanchot's other récit, *Death Sentence*, ends the text with the word 'Come.'[456] Other chapters between these two chapters are only repetitions of each other. No change occurs from one event to another event so that chapters could form a plot. The event of K.'s trial is not a single entity to be represented in a narrative form. It is a process that has no beginning and no end.[457] It has no starting point because K.'s arrest by the representatives of the law has no reason or origin:

> Someone must have slandered Joseph K.; one morning, without having

[453] Marian Hobson, *Jacques Derrida: Opening Lines* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 133.
[454] Jacques Derrida, 'On a Newly Arisen Apocalyptic Tone in Philosophy' in *Raising the Tone of Philosophy: Late Essay by Emmanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida*, ed. by Peter Fenves (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 164.
[455] Maurice Blanchot, *The Madness of the Day,* trans. by George Quasha (New York: Station Hill Press, 1981), p. 10
[456] Maurice Blanchot, *Death Sentence,* trans. by Lydia Davis (Barytown New York: Station Hill, 1978), p. 80.
[457] Breon Mitchell writes about the meaning of the word 'trial' in German which refers not only to an actual trial, but also to the proceedings surrounding it, a process. See Breon Mitchell, 'Translator's Preface' in *Trial*, trans. by Breon Mitchell (New York: Schoken Books, 1990), p. xxv.

done anything wrong, he was arrested.[458]

According to Corngold, this sentence is an enthymeme - an abridge syllogism - in which the conclusion precedes the omitted major premise, if someone is arrested, then someone must have accused him. He also writes that the accusation is before the arrest.[459] This argument also is evident of the absence of beginning in the process of trial. K.'s trial also has no end because K. says I do not want to finish my case and begin it again at the end:

> Shall they say of me at the beginning of my trial I wanted it to end it, and now, at its end, I wanted it to begin again? I do not want them to say that. (228)

K. goes from one place to place after his arrest to make progress in his case. Every chapter is commentary by a commentator about the law and trial. It can be said that K. goes from commentator to commentator; or, as Blanchot says of *The Castle*,

> the essential element in the narrative - that is, the essential aspect of K.'s peregrination - consists not in K.'s going from one place to place, but from exegesis to exegesis.[460]

In every chapter, he listens to the other's interpretation. The narrative becomes the representation of interpretation. Every chapter interprets the law and the narrative stops unfinished when K. is killed without understanding his case or the essence of the law. This is because each interpretation:

> gives rise not only to a reflection, but also to a narration that must in turn be heard, that is to say interpreted at different levels.[461]

According to Blanchot,the interpretation of the law is only the self-reflection of interpreters who are inside the text. They reflect their own views of the law which are not what the law is. Each chapter which is an interpretation of the law becomes a narration. This narration itself invites an interpretation. The process of interpretation continues endlessly. Here, we can

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[458] Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, trans. by Breon Mitchell (New York: Schoken Books, 1990), p. 3. I refer to this edition of *The Trial* in this chapter. This translation has some privileges over others since it has dealt with the difficulties and subtleties of words and style that Kafka has chosen in German. Mitchell himself compares his translation with Edwin Muir's and explains how he has smoothed these difficulties which are crucial to read the text.

[459] Stanley Corngold, *The Fate of the Self: German Writers and French Theory* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 170.

[460] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 393.

[461] Maurice Blanchot, p. 394.

suggest that the text comments on itself, that is it reflects upon itself. According to Blanchot, the more the text comments on itself, the more its centre becomes enigmatic. The endless interpretations only miss what the text is about. In *The Trial*, interpretations miss what the law is.

This text does not represent a story, since the text represents no origin and repeats nothing. It repeats and insists on the process of trial which has always already started and has no ending. K.'s case starts with a lying, emptiness, or void and every chapter seems to show non-events by which we can say they refer to nothing but themselves. Chapters do not have the connective force that organizes plot in traditional narratives. The narrative without a pre-existent story starts and ends with void because everything remains unknown. Kafka's novel turns into what Dowden calls 'narrativity, an autotelic dimension of storytelling.'[462] The 'autotelic' dimension, for Dowden, signifies the independence of a narrative from a pre-existence plot. Kafka by presenting the unknown nature of the law and the repetition of chapters as the different levels of interpretation defers the reduction of the law to the same, that is to say, the known. Derrida argues that the relation between K. and the law is the deferral of relation.[463] The repetition also invites us to encounter difference not the same. This could be thought of in terms of repetition and difference in Deleuze. According to him, the work of the poet is to overturn the orders and representations in order to affirm the state of permanent revolution which characterizes difference in repetition.[464] Although the law always wants homogeneity and reduces everything to the sameness, Kafka presents another law through the repetition of chapters to invoke the creation of difference which means the unknown nature which he wants from the law.[465] This could be the creation of event in the text by referring to itself. This reminds us of the law as the 'feminine element' in Blanchot's *The Madness of the Day* which I discussed in the previous chapter.

The first half of the first chapter is the scene in which K. is arrested but this arrest is not physical seizure or taking by force. By means of performative use of language K. is

[462] Stephen D. Dowden, *Sympathy for the Abyss* ((Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1986), p. 97.
[463] Jacques Derrida, 'Before the Law' in *Acts of Literature*, ed. by Derek Atrridge (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 205.
[464] Gilles Deleuze, Paul Paton, *Difference and Repetition* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 64. For further reading on Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*, see Joe Hughes, *Deleuze's Difference and Repetition* (London: Continuum, 2009).
[465] This also invokes the eternal return which Deleuze characterizes as the identity of difference. It is actually the singularity of the same which enters the process of becoming itself in difference. See Gilles Deleuze, Paul Paton, *Difference and Repetition* (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 50.

arrested and he is accused of something unknown. The law by which he is accused acquires identity as language, since it claims that it tells truth by discovering the meaningful narrative of K.'s story; as one of the guard says:

> You will feel it eventually. (9)

The performative use of language, according to Austin, shows how meaning is not so much what a speaker has in his mind, but rather inheres in the conventional rules involving features of the context. For instance, when someone says: 'could you move that box?,' it is the context that determines whether the sentence is an imperative or a question about one's strength. From this example, it is concluded that meaning is context-bound. Derrida criticizes Austin's speech-act theory arguing that context is boundless.[466] It could be argued that Kafka, through the performative use of language, suggests the impossibility of knowing the law. It is also implied that, since meaning resides in language not the human mind, everything in the récit remains unknown and unpresentable. K. is going to be haunted by his past which the law produces for him. He has been attracted by the law in order to have a past which the law determines not the past as it is. This is evident in two strange men's advice:

> We advice you not to waste your time in useless thoughts, but to
> pull yourself together; great demands will be placed upon you. (8)

This is similar to *The Madness of the Day* (1949) in which the 'I' was attracted by the law to tell his story but he cannot do so.[467] According to the characteristics of the récit, *The Trial* is not formed by a pre-existent story but created during the process of his case. What is told is not outside of the *récit.* Derrida in reading Ponge's 'Fable' writes that the telling and the told are undecidable:

> Its beginning, its invention, or its first coming does not come about before
> the sentence that recounts precisely this event.[468]

The fiction produces itself by speaking of itself; the event is the invention of itself, the beginning of itself. This inaugurating does not recount a pre-existent story. The story of K.

[466] Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (London: Routledge, 1983), pp. 110-134. For Derrida's argument on Austin's speech-act theory, see Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*, trans. by Samuel Weber (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1988). See also Joseph Hillis Miller, *For Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), p. 151.
[467] Maurice Blanchot, *The Madness of the Day,* trans. by George Quasha, p. 18.
[468] Jacques Derrida, *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Vol.1,* ed. by Peggy Kamuf, and Elizabeth Rottenberg, p. 11.

starts with the unknown state, a state of no origin which implies the unknown past that is going to remain unknown.

From the start of this text, K. seems to be on a stage in order to play a role and reveal a story because he is witnessed by some people:

> He could offer Frau Grubach as a witness, or even the two old people across the way, who were now probably on the march to the window opposite his room. (10)

The world of stage or theatre is the world or the life of Kafka in which one's role is to find one's origin. K. is forced by the law to find his own past in a narrative form to perform it in this theatre. Perhaps Gregor's transformation into the vermin in *Metamorphosis* is the reduction which returns to the past, since he becomes unrecognizable to himself when he wakes up in the morning.[469] Before the end of his trial, K. asks the two men:

> Which theatre are you playing at? 'Theatre?' one of them asked, the corners of his mouth twitching, turning to the other for help. His companion gestured like a mute man struggling with his stubborn vocal cords. (226)

From the point of departure to the last scene of *The Trial*, K. is on the stage in search of an origin for his case and the law. As Benjamin says:

> In the Nature Theatre of Oklahoma, for the members of the Oklahoma troupe, the role is their earlier life.[470]

In *America*, Karl, the hero, come across with a theatre that employs whoever joins them. This theatre needs no talent or intelligence.[471] When K. is named by the Examining Magistrate as a house-painter he has been given an identity by the law which is not his identity. K. says about his arrest that perhaps those who have arrested him had orders to arrest some house-painter who is just as innocent as he is:

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[469] Walter Sokel argues that this transformation is the liberation of the repressed unconscious. See Walter Sokel, 'Freud and the Magic of Kafka's Writing' in *The Myth of Power and the Self* (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 2002), p. 159.
[470] Walter Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka, On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death' in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn, p. 133.
[471] Franz Kafka, 'The Nature Theatre of Oklahoma' in *America* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1975).

> Perhaps they'd been ordered to arrest some house-painter […] someone as innocent as I am. (47)

The law, like the theatre, sees people as identical.[472] It makes no difference for the law who the guilty person is, K. or the house-painter. All are guilty and thus the same.

But, in the chapter 'Initial Inquiry' in which K. appears before the law for the first time, K. approaches the desk of Examining Magistrate and closes his book of the law and says that it is a closed book to him:

> Just keep reading through them, Your Honor, I really have nothing to fear from this account book, although it's closed to me. (46)

K. does not believe in the 'homogeneous past' that is practiced by the law in this 'theatre' of the court. The 'homogeneous past,' which I borrow from Benjamin, can explain Kafka's view of the past. Benjamin writes:

> History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now.[473]

According to Benjamin, what comes out of this forgotten past is not a consistent fixed truth but a new and different past. When we rethink a past thought in the present time it can make the shock which disfigures thought. A piece of thought in the time of the past should be pregnant with the tension which produces heterogeneity. Benjamin's view of the past also signifies that the past has not passed and we are in the 'extended present.' In this sense, the past cannot be narrated via a casual series of connections; the narration would really be in the form which Benjamin calls 'constellation' which means the in-between space that tie together the present and past. This space creates new possibilities of connecting. The harnessing together of different moments of time in a constellation challenges the progressive narrative form. [474] Benjamin's view of the past can be applied to Kafka's world which implies that Kafka's world is a theatre without origin. Kafka's parables make this point, e.g. the parable of 'Before the Law' in the middle of *The Trial*. As Benjamin writes:

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[472] It could be related to Benjamin's idea of the selfsame that I discussed above. See Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, trans. by Rodney Livingston and Others, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, Volume IV(Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 207.
[473] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn, p. 252.
[474] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' in *Illuminations*, p. 255.

> Kafka had a rare capacity for creating parables for himself. Yet his parables are never exhausted by what is explainable.[475]

Benjamin suggests that these parables are inexhaustible in their origin.

This reminds us of the 'primal scene' or rather the removal of the possibility of the 'primal scene' as the originary state in Blanchot.[476] It also can be related to the 'primal scene' which is not limited to the past but can be in future. This futurity is described by Blanchot as the radical change:

> Radical change would come in the mode of un-present which it causes to come, without thereby either consigning itself to the future (forseeable or not), or withdrawing into a past (transmitting or not).[477]

The futurity of the 'primal scene' is outside of the empty homogeneous time, neither coming nor transmitted. The narration is impossible in this time, since, according to Derrida, every act of recounting is the beginning or invention that is possible with repetition:

> The act of invention can take place only once, the invented artifact must be essentially repeatable, transmissible, transposable. Therefore, the 'one time' or the 'a first time' of the act of invention finds itself divided or multiplied in itself.[478]

The plurality of the primal scene or the constellation of events in the past implies that every primal scene or event in the constellation is an invention in every recounting. Every time that we recount the past, the primal scene which is considered as 'a first time' is opened within itself to a prior scene. This issues in a new beginning and invention.

The second chapter recounts K.'s first interrogation at the court. He passes through a labyrinth of rooms in an unknown place with locked warehouses and finds the court room full of distorted and old people. Similarly, in the next chapter, K. searches through Law Court

[475] Walter Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka, On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death' in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Fontana Press, 1973), p. 120.
[476] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), p. 72.
[477] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster,* p. 114.
[478] Jacques Derrida, *Psyche: Inventions of the Other, Vol.1*, ed. by Peggy Kamuf, and Elizabeth Rottenberg, p. 34.

Offices which are attics of tenements and usually locked up for years. The unknown places signify the past that is forgotten and strangers in the court signify the unknown and unidentified nature of the law. Through the trial, K. is going to find out the origin of the law and remember his past. K wants to recall his past in a form which, according to Blanchot, repeats,

> what does not take place, will not take place, has not taken place.[479]

This reminds us of Blanchot's idea of approaching the past, the creating of new possibilities in the past by the present or future which invites the unknown (the other and alterity) into the past because the past has not been transmitted as it was.[480] K. reveals this in the last scene in which he is disappointed in relation to remembering his past and finding the origin of the law and lets himself to be killed. K.'s submission to death signifies that he leaves himself open to the future. In other words, he wants to introduce the 'other' in the past and future.

When K. wants to creates his past, it also implies that he does not believe that the act of progressing is an onward movement from the past to future. Benjamin suggests this point:

> To believe in progress is not to believe that progress has already taken place. Kafka did not consider the age in which he lived as an advance over the beginnings of time. The fact that it is now forgotten does not mean that it does not extend in to the present.[481]

Progression, for Benjamin, signifies the process of 'becoming' and inviting the 'other' and it must not be stopped in the past but must be continued there. In other words, it means while we are in the present time, we rethink the past in order to create multiplicity. This creation discloses that we find new thought in the past which has been excluded. In this sense, we forget a piece of thought in the past in order to renew it as Benjamin uses the word 'oblivion' to describe the past in Kafka's world:

> Oblivion is the container from which the inexhaustible intermediate world

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[479] Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond,* trans. by Lycette Nelson (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 32.

[480] Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, p. 15. For more discussion of this 'terrifying ancient, see Gerald L. Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot: The Refusal of Philosophy* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 189.

[481] Walter Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka, On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death' in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn, p. 126.

in Kafka's stories presses toward light.[482]

According to Benjamin, Kafka was after a 'nothing' which alone makes it possible for something to be useful:

> This is what Kafka was after with his desire 'to hammer a table together with painstaking craftsmanship and, at the same time, to do nothing –not in such a way that someone could say 'Hammering is nothing to him,' but 'To him, hammering is real hammering and at the same time nothing,' which would have made hammering even bolder, more determined, more real, and, if you like, more insane.'[483]

Hammering signifies a 'nothing' that is not nothing but something. It is a possible impossible, the invention of the impossible. Kafka is after this invention in the past in order to show that the events of the past are not conveyed as complete and autonomous objects to the present but retain a reserve. Something of the past escapes the present, leaving the past as an incomplete task, already in future. We should convey the future as place of the invention of the 'other' to the past.

In the next chapter, when K. returns to the same house for the court room there is no court room there, it is only an empty interrogation chamber:

> It was indeed empty and in its emptiness looked even more sordid than it had last Sunday. On the table, which stood on the platform, lay several books. (55)

The empty room of the court contains books of the law. This signifies the emptiness of the law; as Derrida argues, there is no anterior legitimacy for the law.[484] In the chapter after that, the two warders who arrested K. are whipped by a flogger for asking Josef for bribes, as a result of complaints Josef K. previously made about them to the Magistrate. The next day he returns to the store room and is shocked to find everything as he had found it the day before, including the Whipper and the two agents:

[482] Walter Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka, On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death' in *Illuminations*, p. 127.
[483] Walter Benjamin, p. 132.
[484] 'Force of law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority' in *Acts of Religion* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 234.

> What he saw, in place of the expected darkness, bewildered him completely. Everything was unchanged, just as he had found it the previous evening when he opened the door. (86)

Kafka does not repeat events that have already taken place. Events are repeated without progress. Here narrative which is based on the repetition of events that have already taken place is disturbed.[485] For Dowden, it is a sort of drawing attention to the unrepresentable by means of subtle indirection. According to Dowden, the unrepresentable is the presence of a thing or event for which there is no proper name and no basis for linguistic comparison.[486] It does not push the narrative forward to an ending. In terms of this end in narrative, Peter Brooks writes:

> If the motor of the narrative is desire, totalizing, building ever-larger units of meaning, the ultimate determinants of meaning lie *at the end*, and narrative desire is ultimately, inexorably, desire *for* the end.[487]

Narrative supposes an end from its starting point and desires the end.[488] The end is the organizing and meaning-producer power in narrative. K.'s story never has such an end. It never seems to desire such an end. After the experience of the Whipper room, K. comes out but with a mind that is completely blank and empty:

> He sat down for a moment to keep assistants around a while longer, shuffled through a few copies, trying to give the impression that he was checking them over, and then, since he realized the assistants would not dare leave with him, he headed for home, tired with his mind a blank. (87)

The court cannot be located in any place and time which implies that the court is without a single identity, an empty place where nothing changes. The law has an empty past and no origin but it wants the human to have a story in order to control him. K. is told to confess in order to escape. (106) Confession is the narration or the story which K. must tell to the court. Blanchot (thinking of a novel by Marguerite Duras) speaks of the indescribable event that

[485] Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intervention in Narrative* (New York: Knopf, 1984), p. 99.
[486] Stephen D. Dowden, *Sympathy for the Abyss* ((Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1986), p. 108.
[487] Peter Brooks, 'Narrative Desire' in *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intervention in Narrative*, p. 52.
[488] Peter Brooks reads Freud's essay 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' as Freud's master plot. For Brooks, the essay lays out most fully a total scheme of how life proceeds from beginning to end and how each individual life in its own manner repeats the master plot and confronts the question of whether the closure of an individual life is contingent or necessary. See Peter Brooks, 'Freud's Masterplot' in *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intervention in Narrative*, p. 96.

cannot be recalled and cannot be forgotten. This can be the story of someone's life.[489] The 'I' in his trials in *The Madness of the Day* has no story for the court because he does not want to be homogenized by narrating the story.[490] For Blanchot, when someone is being questioned to recount his life in a narrative, he is only allowed to survive. He is no longer free to live but he is framed by being limited to a story.[491] This is why Blanchot in *The Madness of the Day* considers the law as feminine by which he means a resistance to narrative which is imposed by law as masculine.[492] Blanchot refers to the femininity of the law not as the opposite of masculinity but as the neutral, genderless space outside the law which distinguishes masculine from feminine.[493]

Every case in the law is subject to three possibilities - namely: definite acquittal, ostensible acquittal, and indefinite postponement. The painter who explains these three possibilities implies that no cases end and are open to postponement, although he does not express this directly. He says that postponement would suit K. better:

> 'The second acquittal is followed by the third arrest, the third acquittal by the fourth arrest, and so on. That is inherent in the very concept of apparent acquittal.' K. was silent. 'Apparent acquittal obviously does not strike you as an advantage,' said the Painter. 'Perhaps protraction would suit you better [….] Protraction is when the trial is constantly kept at the lower stage.' (159-60)

The postponement of the law implies that it is unable to decide. Thus, it can be said that the law is empty. In this sense, Rolf J. Goebel argues that the postponement shows that the law as the master-narrative is undecipherable, ambiguous, and enigmatic; it has no substance.[494] Because of this emptiness, in Blanchot's *Madness of the Day*, the law obliges the narrator to give an account of who he is and what happened.[495] Both K. and the 'I' in Blanchot's récit are before the law which wants to oppress them by imposing a story or identity through an

[489] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation,* p. 462.
[490] Maurice Blanchot, *The Madness of the Day,* p. 18.
[491] Maurice Blanchot, *The Blanchot Reader*, ed. by Michael Holland (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 225.
[492] Maurice Blanchot, *The Madness of the Day,* p. 16.
[493] Hillis Miller argues how in Judith Butler the distinction of genders is made by the social construction. See Joseph Hillis Miller, *For Derrida* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), p.146.
[494] Rolf J. Goebel, 'The Exploration of the Modern City in *The Trial*' in *The Cambridge Companion to Kafka*, ed. by Julian Preece (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 54-5.
[495] Hélène Cixous, *Readings: The Poetics of Blanchot, Joyce, Kafka, Kleist, Lispector, and Tsvetayeva* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), p. 75.

unknown accusation. But both characters are unable to tell a story, since they are not limited to specific personal traits. Therefore, they are not capable of recounting their past.

The Neuter

Blanchot introduces the notion of the *neutral* narrative voice, that is, the impersonal voice in narration. Blanchot writes about the neutral narrative voice in Kafka in the essay 'The Narrative Voice':

> What Kafka teaches us is that storytelling brings the neutral into play. Narration that is governed by the neutral is kept in the custody of the third-person 'he', a 'he' that is neither a third person nor the simple cloak of impersonality. The Narrative 'he' in which the neutral speaks is not content to take the place usually occupied by the subject, whether this latter is a stated or an implied 'I' or the event that occurs in its impersonal signification.[496]

According to Blanchot, Kafka adopts a narrative voice that is neither third person nor impersonal. This narrative voice is not a privileged 'I' who constitutes the center around which the perspective of narrative is organized. Everything is not limited to a privileged 'I'. In other words, we learn about K. neither from the narrator nor the other characters. The narrator speaks at an infinite distance because of which nothing is revealed or concealed. He is just a commentator of the law. In this sense, the narrative voice is silent, 'the unknown side that underlies the speech of commentary, this speaking about speaking.'[497] The Lawyer, the painter, and the priest who represent the law, art, and religion are representatives of something that is constituted and originated by their interpretation. They are nothing but commentators. They are engaged in the torment of endless commentary. Therefore, we see that the text starts from one point and comes back to the point of its departure. It starts with an unknown accusation by the law and ends with an unknown act of the law. The narrator is neither on the side of characters nor the writer. The ungraspable past and the primal scene necessitate the narrative that is the work itself:

> Blanchot's formulations on the narrative voice are an attempt to determine what happens when writing takes place, and how it is not that the writer

[496] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 384.
[497] Maurice Blanchot, p. 394.

> willingly extracts himself from the work but that the work dismisses the writer when it is written.[498]

We can discuss this neutral narrative voice by looking at Walter H. Sokel's essay on dual narrative perspective of *The Trial*. But I go further than Sokel to illustrate the narrative voice. Sokel argues that the narrative perspective of *The Trial* divides into two parts:

> The view of things which K. reflects on in his consciousness, and the view of things which is beyond his reflection.[499]

He suggests that the narrator appears to identify himself fully with K.'s consciousness, but at the same time he disavows it, letting the reader see that this consciousness is ignoring many things. The narrative voice plays the unconsciousness of K. This narrative voice warns the reader not to be deceived by the perspective of the main character.[500] Sokel sees the scene in the Cathedral as a case in point. According to Sokel, the priest (the prison chaplain) warns K. not to form the wrong idea of the Court. To illustrate this, the priest tells K. the parable of the gatekeeper. K. produces an interpretation which identifies completely with the point of view of the main character, the man from the country before the door of the law in the parable. In the parable, a country man stands before the door of the law up to end of his life in order to enter the law. The door-keeper does not allow the man to enter and closes the door at last. According to Sokel, K. finds that the doorkeeper has deluded the man. Afterwards the priest warns K. not to interpret the story of the door-keeper hastily. He shows K. that there are various interpretations for the story. Sokel considers that the priest represents the perspective of K. and the narrator represents the perspective of the reader, a critical narrator who sees the whole truth, the hermeneutic problem. The priest and K. understand that there are various interpretations of the law. Sokel argues that the narrative perspective sees what K.'s consciousness is ignorant of it. We ask: what does the narrator see more than the priest and K.? What are the priest and K. ignorant of? The answer is what the priest says when he speaks of the bewilderment of commentators:

> The text is immutable and the opinions are often only an expression of despair

[498] Gary D. Mole, *Levinas, Blanchot, Jabes: Figures of Estrangment* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1997), p. 35.
[499] William J. Dodd, *Kafka: The Metamorphosis, The Trial. And The Castle* (London: Longman,1995), p. 107.
[500] Stanley Corngold discusses this conscious/unconscious opposition as the break in the narrative in Kafka. See Stanley Corngold, *The Fate of the Self: German Writers and French Theory* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1994).

over it. (220)[501]

This is the point that a critical reader should consider and it is said by the priest not the narrator. The priest reveals a truth about interpretation:

> You do not have to consider everything true, you just have to consider it necessary. (223)

This truth about the meaning of the text is expressed by the priest not the narrator. The narrative voice is lost in the characters' view. Or we can say that the narrator is ignorant of this truth. The narrative voice is dispersed and mobile; it is where always it is missing.[502] These possibilities illustrate the *neutral* narrative voice in Blanchot. Kafka has put characters, narrator, and reader in distance, a neutral situation. In this stance, no one (character, narrator, or reader) is able either to reveal or conceal something. As soon as something is said, its meaning suspended. K., other characters, narrator, and the law never acquire definite and fixed characteristics. They live in deferral or postponement. Blanchot argues that the *neuter* in Kafka is the work, the récit, itself which includes the writer, reader, and narrator, as he writes,

> The distance which was the writer's and the reader's distance from the work and authorized contemplative pleasure, now enters into the work's very sphere in the form of an irreducible strangeness.[503]

The récit itself is the space of strangeness in which the events are created without being related by the narrator or the writer. Since the past is ungraspable and there are primal scenes, the only thing that presents events is the récit that dismisses the writer and the reader.

The Striving for the Primal Scene

What K. wants from the law or writing in his trial is striving for the 'primal scene' that Blanchot illustrates in *Madness of the Day*. The scene is the experience of the Outside in which the 'I' sees the Outside as the experience of impossibility which involves the 'other' and

[501] For a discussion on the frustration of commentary on Kafka, see *The Commentator's Despair: The Interpretation of Kafka's Metamorphosis* (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1973).
[502] Caroline Sheaffer-Jones, 'Figures of the Work: Blanchot and the Space of Literature' in *After Blanchot: Literature, Criticism, Philosophy*, ed. by Leslie Hill, Brian Nelson & Dimitris Vardoulakis (Newark: University of Dlware Press, 2005, p. 191.
[503] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 383.

'becoming.' This 'primal scene' happens at the end of *The Trial* when K. is sitting in black dress in an arm-chair looking as if he were expecting guests. It shows that he is ready to face what is going to occur. He then allows himself to be taken out of town to be killed by the same persons who arrested him the first chapter. This scene is the main key in the text because it reveals what K. wants or what he has wanted from the start of his trial. He sees the past and origin as the place of forgetting and his trial shows this forgetting; as Benjamin writes,

> The object of the trial, the real hero of this incredible book is the forgetting of Itself […] here it has actually become a mute figure in the shape of the accused man, a figure of the most striking intensity.[504]

Benjamin argues that K. appears before a court of justice to recall the past in order to bring out new things from the forgotten past. He desires his death and this desire for dying is other than normal death for everybody. This day is K.'s birthday that coincides with his death and it means the life in death. He wants his death as the experience of impossibility, the primal scene, the Outside which opens to the 'other' in the process of 'becoming.' K. thinks with himself that he recoils all conclusion:

> Shall they say of me at the beginning of my trial I wanted it to end it, and now, at its end, I wanted it to begin again? I do not want them to say that. (228)

K. does not think of the beginning and end. He sees himself in an openness which is involved in the idea of 'becoming.' The flicker of the light at the time of his death suggests the experience of 'becoming' and facing the 'other' in the Outside. This point is confirmed by questions that K. asks himself while he sees the light. He asks who the person is that opens the casement of window:

> Were there objections that had been forgotten? Of course there were. Logic is no doubt unshakable, but it cannot withstand a person who wants to live. Where was the Judge he had never seen? Where was the high court, he had never reached? He raised his hands and spread out all his fingers. (231)

K. in his questions shows the endless process of interpretation, 'logic' which is unshakable but shakes itself by having no foundation. It is foundationless because the foundation has been

[504] Walter Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka, On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death' in *Illuminations*, p. 127.

forced into it. It is not original. Because of this truth, K. has not seen the Judge or the high court which are the origin of the law. This process goes on from interpretation to interpretation endlessly. He does not want to find the origin because he has understood it as nothing but interpretation.

He does not want to live in search of a destination or any origin. He wants his death, a different death, a life in death that opens to the new scene:

> But it cannot withstand a person who wants to live. (231)

His surrender to death makes him approach an absolute which means the 'other.' Blanchot discusses that K.'s death as the continuation of living is a sleep:

> One must sleep just as one must die, nor this unfulfilled and unreal death with which we are content in our everyday lassitude, but another death, unknown, invisible, unnamed, and furthermore inaccessible, to which it may be K. arrives, but not within the limits of the book: in the silence of the absence of the book, […] through a supplementary punishment.[505]

Sleep becomes synonymous with death. Sleep or death entails the concept of life, the life of entering the Outside, outside of the limits of the book which signifies outside of the limits of writing. K.'s submission to this death is a supplementary punishment that rejects any finality, limitation, and generality. The supplementary nature of K.'s death involves differance which postpones his death. According to Blanchot, what constitutes Kafka's last word is that:

> There is no Last Judgment, no more than there is an end.[506]

Blanchot believes that if K. dies, his disappearance becomes synonymous with renewal, with a call to life, the life of the *other* and becoming. As Blanchot writes:

> There is no actual death in Kafka, or more exactly, there is never an end.[507]

K. strives for what Derrida calls the experience of *aporia.* This experience is different from endless experience of interpretation. In interpretation, we find:

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[505] Maurice Blanchot, 'Kafka and Brod' in *Friendship*, trans. by Elizabeth Rottenberg (California: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 251
[506] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Last Word' in *Friendship*, p. 253.
[507] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Language of Fiction' in *The Work of Fire*, trans. by Charlotte Mandell (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 81.

> norm, rule, value, or the imperative of justice that necessarily have general form, even if this generality prescribes a singular application in each case.[508]

The law puts to work generality, calculable process, determined decision, and single identity. All these terms imply a closed structure that lives on endless interpretations. In contrast with this operation, Derrida's *aporia* means an experience that concerns:

> singularity, individuals, groups, irreplaceable existence, the other or myself *as* other, in a unique situation.[509]

It is believed that every time a rule and an example are invented justice has been done.[510] But, according to Derrida, it is not a full experience of aporia because the aporia does not allow passage. The aporia is a non-path. The passage, here, means that the aporia does not allow generalization. Justice is done when it does not come to final destination which means it is subject to singularity or uniqueness of every case. This uniqueness of every decision makes it impossible to generalize the concept of justice. This impossibility of generalization is the aporia (non-path). The *aporia*, in this sense, is the idea of 'becoming,' the repetition in singularity that is unique in every repetition. K. wants to live in this singularity in which he is unique and a general rule is not imposed on him. He desires a living in repetition in which singularity and difference occur. The door-keeper, in the parable of the law, says to the country man that this door of the law has been made for him but the door-keeper says he closes it (217). This implies that the law is against singularity. The law sees all its subjects the same. For this purpose, it defers the passage.[511] But K. in his death wants singularity. This death because of singularity entails the 'other' and the idea of 'becoming' which we saw in the experience of the Outside in Blanchot's primal scene. K. is in the primal scene because when he knees to be slaughtered by the two men the casement of a window is opened and he sees a light and this is the same experience of the child in Blanchot's primal scene.[512] K. in his experience sees the living he strives for, the life in death, the life of singularity.

We must remember that the *récit* only can present such a scene. The *récit* presents an event and the very act of its recounting at one instant. In this sense, the *récit* is outside the system of writing which works in the nature of the law. *The Trial* can be a *récit* because it

[508] Jacques Derrida, 'Force of law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority' in *Acts of Religion*, p.245.
[509] Jacques Derrida, p.245.
[510] Jacques Derrida, 'Before the Law' in *Acts of Literature*, p. 187.
[511] Jacques Derrida, p. 203.
[512] Maurice Blanchot, *The Writing of the Disaster*, p. 72.

does not imitate the everyday life and death that conventional novelists create. For Blanchot, this imitation is arbitrary and approximate:

> In a work in which some care for composition and a studied connection of language and anecdote are apparently indispensible, how can one imitate the fabric of real things in which there is neither rhythm, nor symmetry, nor figure, nor anything that evokes a literary law?[513]

The Trial does give account of something exterior by telling a story. *The Trial* is not based on the superficial and arbitrary observation of life. It creates a life outside everyday life, a life outside of memory, the nothingness without memory and beyond life.

[513] Maurice Blanchot, 'The New Novel' in *Faux Pas*, ed. by Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, trans. by Charlotte Mandell (California: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 184-85.

Conclusion

> *The unavowable community is the opening of unknown spaces of freedom.* [514]
>
> *Maurice Blanchot*

In the introduction, I opened my thesis by arguing that Borges teaches us that Kafka and Blanchot (although Borges does not mention Blanchot, his argument can include other writers who are similar to Kafka in terms of the idea of the 'precursor') are writers who modify their past and future:

> The fact is that each writer *creates* his precursors. His work modifies our perception of the past, as it will modify the future.[515]

The word, *creates*, suggests that Kafka's works reveal that a text is not closed upon itself but open and in communication with other texts in the past and future. The idea of 'communication' in this stage of the thesis must be understood outside the traditional meaning because we see how Blanchot renewed Kafka in the sense that he no longer belongs to the past. The primacy of writing in deconstruction is argued by Blanchot to be the space for 'the Other' or the space of 'relation in itself:'

> We could say that the Other, this 'Other' in play in the third kind of relation, is no longer one of its terms; it is neither one nor the other, being nothing other than relation itself.[516]

Kafka enters this space but before reading Blanchot we did not know about this space. It could also be thought that Blanchot has proposed this idea of space by looking at Kafka. In other words, Kafka has created Blanchot. When we read Kafka, we understand Blanchot. Timothy Clark's explanation of the meaning of the work for Blanchot helps to make my point about the creativity of works and the necessity of being exposed to one another:

> Blanchot argues that a work written only to be read can say nothing fundamentally new. Thus, even as the writer is engaged by the work's emergent self-affirmation, its pressing itself forward according to the law of its own

[514] Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, trans. by Pierre Joris (New York: Station Hill Press, 1988), p. 56.
[515] Jorge Luis Borges, 'Kafka and His Precursors' in *Other Inquisitions*, trans. by Ruth L. C. Simms, p. 108.
[516] Maurice Blanchot, *The Infinite Conversation*, p. 73.

> emergent properties, he or she must resist both the desire for self-expression and also the hypothetical reader for whom the words may already have another and alien signification; either could foreclose the work's emergence on its own singular, unprecedented terms.[517]

Here, it is suggested that neither writer or reader are the producer of the work. The work itself is the origin of itself. The work is not the self-expression of the writer or the interpretation of the reader. The work emerges as the result of its dialogue with other works. Kafka's and Blanchot's works both emerge when they are read together. In this sense, Kafka, Blanchot, and the reader are in the space of the work. It is, for Benjamin, the space of truth content:

> For Benjamin, truth content is conceivable only in the dialogue of understanding in which the creator, the work, every person the work reaches, and the whole historical world participate.[518]

Benjamin opposes 'truth content' to 'material content.' The former is the work in dialogue with other works and the latter is the self expression of the writer and the reader in the work. Benjamin, using metaphor, describes the 'material content' as wood and ash in a burning funeral pyre and the 'truth content' as the flame.[519] The 'material content' is the subjective interpretations and the text's historical context whereas the 'truth content' is the work's afterlife that is continued by the dialogue of the writer, the work, reader, and other works.[520]

In his reading of Holderlin's poem in 'The Sacred Speech of Holderlin,' Blanchot considers the sacred as the power of the word which allows the unknown and unexpressed, what has been excluded from language, present itself. He writes:

> How can the Sacred, which is 'unexpressed,' 'unknown,' which is what opens provided only that it is not discovered, which reveals because unrevealed - how can it fall into speech, let itself be alienated into becoming, itself pure

[517] Timothy Clark, 'Contradictory Passion: Inspiration in Blanchot's 'The Space of Literature' *Substance*, Vol. 25, No. 1, Issue 79. (1996), p. 50.
[518] Sandor Radnoti, 'Benjamin's Dialectic of Art and Society' in *Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History*, ed. by Gary Smith, p. 128.
[519] Walter Benjamin, 'Goethe's Elective Affinities' in *Selected Writing: Volume 1, 1913-1926* ed. by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 298.
[520] Benjamin uses the word 'afterlife' in his essay, 'The Task of Translator,' when he argues that translation is the afterlife of the original work. Translation actually reveals the truth content of the work. See Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator' in *Illuminations*, ed. by Hannah Arendt, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: Fontana Press, 1973), p. 72.

> interiority, the exteriority of song? In truth, that cannot really be, that is impossible. And the poet is nothing but the existence of this impossibility, just as the language of the poem is nothing but the retention, the transmission of its own impossibility.[521]

The poet by the power of the poem becomes the medium in which the 'unknown' that does not fall into speech presents itself. The 'unknown' which is called upon by the poem can be considered as the 'other' which makes the poet's existence possible and impossible at the same time. The coming of the 'unknown' opens the poet's existence to an exterior. This openness makes existence to go beyond itself. By returning to the notion of literature as 'worklessness,' we understand that Blanchot believed in the power of the word, in the power of language to lead us where it likes, where we may not have thought of going. Blanchot's reading of the Sacred implies that there is a wonderful selflessness, an emptying-out of self and an investment in language, a faith in the unfailing ability of language to lead us out of ourselves, out of our own nonexistent ego into something other, something beyond. This selflessness made by writing has been practiced by Kafka. By living in separation from the worldly life, he wants to live in writing, but it revealed that living in writing is living in the state of non-being, in hollowness, a state of nullity.

Blanchot argues about the relation between writing and the self, that writing supposes to give the 'immediate proximity' of the world, the possibility of the direct experience of the world, but it produces a gap between writing and the world. In other words, writing necessitates the break to reveal the illusion of proximity. The break from empirical world affected by writing reveals the emptiness of selfhood and the distance from the world. Kafka tries to constitute a sense of selfhood through writing but it leads him in his letter to Felice to write that he wants to perish by his pen - this implies the dissolution of self by writing.[522] In his many letters to Felice, Kafka wants to see himself as the center in order to constitute selfhood by possessing Felice and making her resemble to himself. The love of Felice is actually Kafka's self-love which never terminates in the sense of selfhood. The letter-writing or writing reveals the gap between the consciousness of the self and the outside world. This

[521] Maurice Blanchot, *The Work of Fire*, trans. by Charlotte Mandell, (California: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 126.
[522] Franz Kafka, *Letters to Felice*, ed. by Erich Hellex and Jurgen Born, trans. by James Stern and Elizabeth Duckworth (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 411.

gap makes the writer see his non-existent ego, his nothingness. This why Kafka writes to Felice:

> The trouble is I am not at peace with myself; I am not always 'something', and if for once I am 'something', I pay for it by 'being nothing' for months on end. (*Letters to Felice* 326)

Writing transforms Kafka into the state of between being and non-being. This transformation exposes him to excess:

> Writing means revealing oneself to excess. (*Letters to Felice* 271)

For Blanchot, this excess is the 'process of dying' which inscribes a 'radical reversal' by which the writer experiences an inability to grasp what is there, that is, the inability to act as the cognitive subject. The 'excess of writing' or the 'process of dying' takes us 'beyond' waiting for the 'other.' Blanchot writes:

> The act of dying itself constitutes this leap, the empty depth of the beyond. It is the fact of dying that includes a radical reversal, through which the death that was the extreme form of my power not only becomes what loosens my hold upon myself by casting me out of my power to begin and even to finish, but also becomes that which is without any relation to me, without power over me, the unreality of the indefinite. It is not the irreversible step beyond which there would be no return, for it is that which is not accomplished, the interminable, the incessant.[523]

This dying as the principle idea of Blanchot proposes that existence is interminable and indeterminable; it is an afterlife but within life. The futurity of the unknown afterlife is brought into life by writing. This is why the dying is interminable. It is the 'beyond' without stepping beyond. Blanchot's narrator in *The Instant of my Death*:

> experienced then a feeling of extraordinary lightness, a sort of beatitude (nothing happy, however) - sovereign elation? The encounter of death with death?[524]

[523] Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature*, trans. by Ann Smock (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 106.

This dying as the 'encounter of death with death' is not a relation between life and death but an event outside all relation. It is dying in 'the infinitive' as Blanchot writes in *The Step Not Beyond*.[525]

In one of his letters to Max Brod, Kafka articulates his idea of writing and dying:

> What a weak or even nonexistent ground I live on, over a darkness out of which the dark power emerges when it wills and, without bothering about my stammering, destroys my life. Writing maintains me, but is not it more correct to say that it maintains this sort of life?[526]

The 'non-existent ground' as the life in writing is the 'maintaining' which is neither life nor death; it is a 'sort of life' which lingers as the state of becoming. This dying in *The Metamorphosis* is experienced by Gregor who finds himself transformed into the dying process. Gregore is not in the world; he is elsewhere but within this world. He lives in the afterlife within life.

Gregor's transformation is outside modernity in which, as Blanchot writes, 'we cannot do anything with an object that has no name.'[527] According to Bruns, modernity reconstituted the workings of language - naming, predication, description, narration - as a means of control and method of domination.[528] Gregor has no identity according to the system of modernity; he is unrecognizable, an 'other' who has undone his being in order not to be named by modernity. Bruns thinks of modernity via Foucault. Foucault writes about the work of language in modernity:

> The threshold between Classicism and modernity has been definitively crossed when words ceased to intersect with representations and to provide a

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[524] Maurice Blanchot, 'The Instant of My Death', trans. by Elizabeth Rottenberg in *The Instant of My Death & Demeure*, ed. by Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 5.
[525] Maurice Blanchot, *The Step Not Beyond*, trans. by Lycette Nelson (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 94.
[526] Franz Kafka, *Letters to Friends, Family, and Editors*, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston (London: John Calder, 1978), p. 333. I have used the translation by Stanley Corngold because he has used the word 'maintain' which makes me connect it to Derrida's idea of lingering. See Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis: the Translation, Backgrounds and Contexts, Criticism*, trans and ed. by Stanley Corngold (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), p. 73.
[527] Maurice Blanchot, *The Gaze of Orpheus*, trans. by Lydia Davis (New York: Station Hill, 1981), p. 41.
[528] Gerald L. Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot: The Refusal of Philosophy* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), p. 184.

spontaneous grid for the knowledge of things.[529]

Words change their function as representation and present things in themselves. This reminds us of Blanchot's argument how word makes thing absent and word itself becomes the thing. The human removes the materiality of the thing and replaces it with whatever he attributes to the thing. The thingness of word means the absence of the thing. The state of Gregor as a monstrous vermin is the leap from the human to the dehuman. Derrida in 'The End of Man' compares the opposition of humanism and dehumanization to Nietzsche's distinction between 'superior man' and 'superman.'[530] In the former, according to Derrida, the truth of man is consciousness. Consciousness is the truth of man to the extent that man appears to himself in the higher level. The problem is that consciousness in this higher level gives being to objects in the world and then considers himself as the center from which being originates. The 'superman' is outside the former humanism; it is a leap or an interruption which puts man in the dehumanized condition, in neither/nor or neutralized situation. This state is an act of forgetting of being that is performed by writing as Kafka says:

Writing depends not on vigilance but on the ability to forget one's self.[531]

Kafka's animal stories can be argued concerning the idea of the end of man in this sense of forgetting of being in order to live in the 'superman' or dehumanized state, the state outside of modernity.

Bruns who argues modernity via Foucault writes that modernity reconstitutes the workings of language - naming, predication, description, narration - as a means of control and method of domination.[532] By referring to Blanchot, we see that the 'I' is a name without significations in the system of sign/signified of modernity. Blanchot argues that the act of naming something is arbitrary. In other words, naming keeps a thing anonymous in the sense that it does not allow the thing present itself as it is. It does not mean that when the thing presents itself outside the workings of language it names itself. In fact, the thing becomes anonymous, since it is not named by language. In other words, when the thing presents itself,

[529] Foucault, Michel, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 331.
[530] Jacques Derrida, 'The End of Man' in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 135.
[531] Franz Kafka, *I Am a Memory Come Alive: Autobiographical Writings*, ed. by Nahum Glatzer (New York: Schocken, 1947), p. 224.
[532] Gerald L. Bruns, *Maurice Blanchot: The Refusal of Philosophy* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University press, 1887), p. 184.

it frees itself from the limitation which naming imposes on it. For Blanchot, outside the project of modernity as naming, the writer lives in the 'process of dying' and the 'worklessness' as an undoing of being. The writer lives in the interminable existence of a 'dying process' outside the workings of language. His memory is outside the time-place continuum; he does not live in the past, the present, and the future, but in the 'extended present' that does not pass. In this 'extended present,' which I discussed in chapter five, it is impossible to narrate the past. The writer lives in this 'extended present' in which his life is created without passing into the past. This is what Blanchot proposes as the récit. As it is different from a novel, the récit is not in the narrative form which recounts a pre-existent story in a plot. The récit creates its event in the time of telling without being haunted by the past. This is the state of the anonymous 'I' of the writer outside the work of language as naming, predication, and narrative. Joseph K. in *The Trial* tries to escape from the narrative system which law imposes on him. This why he leaves the trial as a process that has no beginning and no end. This récit in terms of representing a story has no origin and repeats nothing. It repeats and insists on the process of trial that has always already started and has no ending. The event of the trial is the invention of itself, the beginning of itself. This inaugurating does not recount a pre-existent story. The story of K. starts with the unknown state, a state of no origin which implies the unknown past that is going to remain unknown; his trial is postponed to the unknown future. K. wants to be outside the naming system of modernity which forces him to have a story in narrative form. This is similar to the narrator's state in Blanchot's *The Madness of the Day*:

> A story? No. No stories, never again.[533]

The 'I' says he is not able to form a story out of events he has seen. The madness of the *récit* is unrepresentability - an abyss, as the 'I' says at the last line of the text.

After further discussion of how the act of writing leaves open the space for the 'other,' I will discuss the ethics of writing emerging from the notion of 'the other' in Kafka and Blanchot. Here, I look to the Levinasian conception of ethics which could be summarized as the putting into question of the ego, the knowing subject, self-consciousness.[534] Ethics in the Levinasian sense is the rejection of the cognitive act of the ego that reduces all otherness to

[533] Maurice Blanchot, *The Madness of the Day,* p. 18.
[534] Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derrida and Levinas* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992), p. 5.

itself. In other words, ethics is the self-critique by which the self opens itself to the 'other' or an exterior. For Levinas, ethics occurs in language:

> Language precisely maintains the other - to whom it is addressed, whom it calls upon or invokes […] language does not consist in invoking him as a being represented and thought. But this is why language institutes a relation irreducible to the subject-object relation.[535]

I have argued in this thesis that language or writing as the place for ethics produces the heterogeneous relation that undoes 'the subject-object relation.' The two sides of this relation become other and unknown to each other.

The ethics of writing in Blanchot's sense is not limited solely to the domain of the self-critique. It does not only open the self but also the whole community to 'the other.' Blanchot in *The Unavowable Community* proposes that being is always in incompletion and cannot stand independently alone. He traces this lack in the necessity of being exposed to questioning:

> The awareness of the insufficiency arises from the fact that it puts itself in question, which question needs the other or another to be enacted.[536]

The insufficiency does not necessitate completion in order to be closed and find an identity but questions being and invites the 'other.' The act of questioning opens being towards the 'other:'

> A being does not want to be recognized, it wants to be contested: in order to exist it goes towards the other.[537]

Blanchot brings up the inseparability of being and community. The being-in-the other is at the heart of community, since the existence of every being calls upon the plurality of others. Therefore, it summons community. Being is not individuated; it must exist in 'the other.' The death of subjectivity is the experience of the community.[538] This situation implies the absence

[535] Immanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. by Alphons Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 73.
[536] Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, p. 5.
[537] Maurice Blanchot, p. 6.
[538] Blanchot finds this idea of community in Bataille's concept of 'inner experience.' As Benjamin Noys writes, 'in the ruin of the subject in 'an undefined throng of possible existences' inner experience becomes an experience of community.' See Benjamin Noys, *Georges Bataille: A Critical Reader* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), p. 51.

of community in a traditional sense as communion in which beings lose themselves inside a totality in movement.[539] Jean-Luc Nancy, to whom Blanchot responds in developing the idea of 'the community of the 'other', criticizes the traditional community because it aims at:

> the fusion into a body, into a unique and ultimate identity that would be no longer exposed.[540]

Nancy, like Blanchot, opposes totalitarianism to 'the community of the other.'[541] The traditional community is characterized as the search for belonging and the emphasis is on the cultural construction of identity, the self versus the other.[542]

In the view of 'the community of the other,' being cannot be together with the 'other' and exist as a separate individual. Being enters the process of composing and decomposing itself. Community in the sense of having boundaries is not founded because it is open to an exterior. Nancy writes about Blanchot's community:

> Community necessarily takes place of in what Blanchot has called 'unworking' [*desoeuvrement]*, referring to that which, before or beyond the work, withdraws from the work, and which no longer having to do either with production, or with completion, bur which encounters interruption, fragmentation, suspension. Community is made of the interruption of singularities. Communication is the unworking of the social, economic, technical institutional work.[543]

This community removes the hierarchical system of society. However, this classless community does not fuse its parts together as equal entities; it is not the matter of equal individual beings or social institutions. Members of this community are not reduced to be same. Any member does not treat the other as the same, to reduce the other to another (like) myself. This community does not consider an ultimate goal as the final product; the community abandons its boundaries to what comes. It could be said that 'the community of the other' is the absence of community in the sense of the gathering of its members in a fusion or series.

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[539] Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, p. 7
[540] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, trans. by Peter Conner and etc. (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2004), p. xxxviii.
[541] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. xxxix.
[542] Gerard Delanty, *Community* (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. xii.
[543] Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. 31.

'The community of the other' in Blanchot is linked to writing that is the making of relation between two others; writing does not set the self against the other but it establishes a heterogeneous relationship by which they are created anew. The community of writing, for Blanchot, is:

> the search for the last words: 'Come, come you for whom the injunction, the prayer, the expectation is not appropriate.'[544]

Writing brings about events that come unexpectedly and unpredictably and could not be reduced to appropriation by which the communion of individualities constructs identity. In this sense, writing exposes beings in the community to new events as the act of questioning and necessitates the being-in-the other. This could be considered as the freedom which Blanchot means when he writes that the unavowable community is the opening to unknown spaces of freedom.[545] A similar idea can be seen in Giorgio Agamben's notion of 'whatever being' by which he means that it is a pure and empty relation to language, to predication, yet without being defined once and for all. 'Whatever being' does not mean its qualities; it is its exposure to all other qualities that each particular quality re-says and re-calls. It touches itself in language in the pure passion of being called. As Thomas Wall explains, such a being in Agamben occupies a particular place that is radically put into question as it opens onto another space.[546]

Kafka as a member of a minority (the Jewish community) grew up within a minority (the German-speaking population) at a time when there was little or no communication between the two groups or with the mainly Czech-speaking citizens of Prague. This minority within a minority has been discussed by Deleuze:

> The impossibility of writing in German is the deteritorialization of the German population itself, an oppressive minority that speaks a language cut off from the masses, like a 'paper language' or an artificial language; this all the more true for

[544] Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, p. 12.
[545] Maurice Blanchot, p. 56.
[546] Thomas Carl Wall, *Radical Passivity: Levinas, Blanchot, and Agamben* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), p. 125. See Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. by Michel Hardt (Minnepolis: Minnesota University Press, 1993).

> the Jews who are simultaneously a part of this minority and excluded from it.[547]

Deleuze argues that Kafka use a minor version of German language which is itself a minor language within the Czech language of Prague. This double minority is a motivation to struggle for the community outside the major Prague community. The deterritorialized minority is considered as 'the other' in the majority. Kafka attempts to tear out of the majority the hidden possibilities of his minority. He opens the major community to the minority as 'the other.'

In his biography of Kafka, Sander L. Gilman points out that, during World War I, Kafka was attracted to Jewish identity by the Zionists and thus began to study Hebrew as means of forming his Jewish identity. Kafka, who was already interested in the Yiddish language for the sake of his Jewish identity, was given a chance to be more Jewish by the Zionists and their emphasis on Hebrew as the spoken language of the Jews. But this Jewish writing was impossible:

> Kafka himself noted that Jewish writing in German is a 'literature impossible in all respect.'[548]

Kafka does not share political Zionism's need for the construction of identity and the hegemonic community of Jews.

Harold Bloom reads Kafka through some of his short stories and brings up the notion of the 'Kafkan Negative.' According to Bloom, for Kafka, the Law is an empty repetitive compulsion and he repudiates the Law as what is known, proclaimed, and taught by the normative sages. On the other side is the Kabbalah as a secrete doctrine guarded by Gnostic secretaries. What remains is the suspended situation of Jewish people between the truth of Jewish memory and the meaning of the future messianism:

> Gregor is suspended between the truth of the past, or Jewish memory and the meaning of the future, or Jewish messianism.[549]

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[547] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature*, trans. by Dona Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 16. Franz Kafka, *The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 1910-1913*, ed. Max Brod, trans. Joseph Kresh (New York: Schocken, 1949).
[548] Sander L. Gilman, *Franz Kafka* (London: Reahtion Books, 2005), p. 89.
[549] Harold Bloom, 'Introduction', in *Franz Kafka's The Metamorphosis*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988), p. 17.

The positive is the Law or normative Judaism, the closed and unified community. By contrast, the negative is the Judaism of the Negative which is revolutionary and set towards the future, the non-messianic community:

> The Kafkan Negative most simply is his Judaism, which is to say the spiritual form of Kafka's self-consciousness Jewishness, as exemplified in that extraordinary aphorism: 'What is laid upon us is to accomplish the negative; the positive is given.' The positive is the Law or normative Judaism; the negative is not so much Kafka's new Kabalah, as it is that which is still laid upon us: the Judaism of the Negative, of the future as it is always rushing towards us. [550]

'The Kafkan Negative' is unlike the Hegelian negativity which means that self achieves consciousness through dialectical method. Kafka opts for the negativity that opens the community to the future to come. Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, for Bloom, is an illustration of this Negative. Like other Kafka's narratives, the negative is the interruption, the place where truth is. The rupture is set neither towards past or future. The futurity of the Negative is not moving towards transcendence but it is to be always in rupture between the normative tradition of the past and the messianic age:

> *The Metamorphosis* takes place somewhere *between* truth and meaning, a 'somewhere' identical with the modern Jewish rupture from the normative tradition. Truth is in hope and neither is available to us, while meaning is in the messianic age, and we will not come up to either.[551]

The mode of community for Kafka is the abandonment of identity and the ultimate single truth. 'The rupture of the normative tradition' which is totality reminds us of the inoperative community which Nancy explains via Blanchot.

Kafka in 'Josefine, the Singer or The Mouse People' illustrates 'the community of the other.' From the beginning the story, Josefine and her song are deprived of any sense of leadership or heroism that totalizes the community. Josefine, the narrator says, 'is one of

[550] Harold Bloom, 'Introduction', in *Franz Kafka's The Metamorphosis*, p. 12.
[551] Harold Bloom, p. 17.

us.'[552] Her position for the people 'has never been properly defined' (100). She is not a leader with sovereignty:

> This squeaking that arises where silence is imposed on everyone else comes almost as a message from the people to the individual. (100)

She is neither the representative of the whole people nor the individual. Her song, as a message, has neither sender nor receiver because the people and the individual are the same. People 'take care of Josefine the way a father looks after a child' (99). She is not a heroine because the people are not dedicated to her:

> Unconditional devotion is all but unknown to our people. (98)

Her song 'as such does not represent anything extraordinary' (95). No one is sure of her artistry is song or just a squeaking. Josefine's singing is neither artistic skill nor the manifestation of everyday life. People in the story are unmusical and at the same time have traditions of musicality. Her song is squeaking that is neither silence nor speaking. She thinks that she protects the people but they believe that 'she rarely has anything to say' (99). Neither music nor art fuses the people together in some higher spirituality, a single truth. The community, for Kafka, is without head and the ultimate goal. Bataille opposes Kafka's community to a Communism that:

> is prepared to subordinate the present moment to the imperative power of a goal.[553]

Josefine is feminine. This implies that Kafka sees art as feminine. This femininity is not only limited to Josefine; the people are feminine:

> She, who appears to be strikingly gentle even among a *people as rich in such feminine types* as our own, seemed at that moment downright mean. (96)

For Blanchot, the community is 'absolutely feminine,' with the meaning that it goes beyond any specificity, outside a psychological or sociological level and beyond the mythic and the

[552] Franz Kafka, 'Josefine, the Singer or The Mouse People' in *Kafka's Selected Short Stories*, trans. by Stanely Corngold (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007), p. 106.
[553] Georges Bataille, *Literature and Evil*, trans. by Alastair Hamilton (New York: Marion Boyars, 1985), p. 153.

metaphysical.'[554] The absolutely feminine' crosses over any boundary and situates the community in excess,

> the excess that comes with the feminine.[555]

The excess of femininity shows itself in being close to death and the abandonment of individuality. The people in Josefine's community are those who are familiar with death:

> She does not save us. It is easy to be the savior of this people - a people that is well acquainted with death. (100)

The excess of femininity exposes us to death. Here excess is the opening of freedom through the transgression of identity; it moves from individual to the world and to the cosmos. Transgression is:

> a movement which always exceeds the bounds, that can never be anything but partially reduced to order.[556]

The community becomes fragmentary; it is composed and decomposed. As Blanchot says,

> the strangeness of what could not be common is what founds that community, eternally temporary and always already deserted.[557]

The community without history is the absence of community. The narrator says that 'we completely neglect historical research' (100) or 'we practice no history' (108). The temporary and fragmentary community for Blanchot is 'episodic.'[558] When Josefine abandons the people at the end of the story, they consider her as an episode in their ahistorical community:

> She is a brief episode in the eternal history of our people. (107)

The eternal history is what Blanchot considers as 'eternally temporary.' The temporary community lives on forgetting and sends everything to the past that does not exist: 'the heightened redemption of being forgotten' (108). The narrator in the beginning sees Josefine and the people as the same - thus, the community is not separable from her singing or art. In other words, the community is itself art, the community of the excess.

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[554] Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, p. 53.
[555] Maurice Blanchot, p. 53.
[556] Benjamin Noys, *Georges Bataille: A Critical Reader* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), p. 84.
[557] Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, p. 54.
[558] Maurice Blanchot, p. 48.

The narrator associates the people with childness. This childhood exists in the community forever: 'A certain unfading childishness pervades our people' (102). The narrator contrasts this notion of everlasting childhood with the view of other people who think that their children make the future of the people when they grow younger. In Josefine's community, the people have no schools and remain childlike: 'Hardly does a child appear than it is a child no longer' (101). Bataille sees in Kafka the tendency of a sustained infantile situation which implies the excess of childhood:

> He chose the unrestrained caprice of his heroes, their childishness and carelessness. In a word, he wanted an irrational world, which escaped classification, to remain supreme and to provide an existence only possible to the extent in which it called for death.[559]

The everlasting childhood of the people is associated with the excess of death that removes classification and boundary to characterize the community as the experience of excess by moving towards outside. The experience of everlasting childhood is the violent transformation of freedom and excess.

Josefine's community is a community of art that exists without any head or leader. It does not dissolve its members into a single unity. Art founds a community that is in excess and set towards outside, open to the future. This is 'the community of the other,' the community of writing which Blanchot proposes:

> Hence the foreboding that the community is linked to a certain kind of writing, a writing that has nothing else to search for the last words: 'Come, come you for whom the injunction, the prayer, the expectation is not appropriate.'[560]

[559] Georges Bataille, *Literature and Evil*, p. 158.
[560] Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, p. 12.

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